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(October, 1851–December, 1851)

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CAUSERIES DU LUNDI

By
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CONTENTS

NOTICE ON M. RAYNOUARD, BY M. WALCKENAER	1
"LES GAJETÉS CHAMPÊTRES," BY M. JULES JANIN	18
MEMOIRS OF THE CARDINAL DE RETZ	31
RIVAROL	49
MADAME THE DUCHESS D'ANGOULÊME	67
LA HARPE	81
LA HARPE—ANECDOTES	97
LE BRUN-PINDARE	114
MADAME DE MOTTEVILLE	132
SIEYÈS	149
M. FIÉVÉE	172
THE CARDINAL DE RETZ (SECOND ARTICLE)	189
CHARLES PERRAULT	203
NOTES	219
INDEX	227

RAYNOUARD¹

Monday, 6 October 1851.

THIS Notice on M. Raynouard, which was read at the last public sitting of the Academy of Inscriptions, has recalled attention to a worthy and excellent man, a man of original character and eccentric ways, naturally kind yet shrewd, rude and abrupt in tone and address, who, at the beginning of the Empire period, had the greatest dramatic success of the day with his tragedy *Les Templiers*, who since then created a new branch of learning (the study of the Classical Provençal and everything connected with it), established and organised it in such a way that it has borne fruit, and really distinguished himself by his extensive and judicious labours in that field. Although M. Raynouard has been hitherto appraised at his true worth by eminent panegyrists and biographers, by M. Mignet, his successor in the French Academy, by M. Walckenaer only yesterday, by a young scholar whose too early death is greatly to be regretted, M. Charles Labitte, who was the first to devote to him a detailed literary notice; although his philological labours and methods formed the subject of several of M. Villemain's lectures, and lent themselves to some deep discussions on the part of MM. Wilhelm von Schlegel, Fauriel and Ampère, we may say that his work and influence as a whole have not yet been regularly and completely expounded, discussed and criticised. A scholar who does himself honour by proclaiming himself one of his pupils, but is quite an independent pupil, M. Guessard, appears to have promised a work of the kind, demanding some quite special qualifications and studies, which alone lend weight and authority to an opinion. For our part, being incompetent to go to the bottom of these learned matters, we will confine ourselves here to what lies within our province and horizon, and at the same time meet the demands of our readers, by trying to grasp

¹ Notice historique sur M. Raynouard, par M. Walckenaer.

and indicate M. Raynouard's mental conformation, a few of the essential characteristics of his personality, and pointing out, if possible, where lay his grain of originality.

François-Just-Marie Raynouard who, in his first essays, called himself Raynouard (du Var), was born at Brignoles on the 8 September 1761. *He came from Brignoles*, we must never forget that fact when judging him. No distinguished man ever preserved the primitive stamp of his province, of his native town, more strongly than Raynouard. In accent especially he preserved his origin. Massillon, Fléchier, Sieyès, who also came from the South, pronounced their words with the *soft breath*, as the Greeks called it. Raynouard, more rustic, had the *hard breath*, a something robust and mordant in his pronunciation. But he showed his origin in other ways besides his accent, that is to say by his heart, his patriotism, his ideas. His original local impress may be discovered even in his erudite and political writings. When, for instance, he attributed so much importance to the municipal constitution of the old cities, when he believed in the perpetuity of this constitution since the Roman times and throughout the different conquests, when he made this the pivot of his political theory, it was because he had observed it at Brignoles and in the neighbourhood, in the Provence; he involuntarily transferred to the rest of France that permanent and latent form of constitution whose local tradition had first impressed his mind, had imbued and infected him as it were with a first love. And so in all things he makes the South, *his* South, the centre of his erudition and his conquest; he held that the old language of the South was originally the dominating and only language for the whole of France, even for the France beyond the Loire. One day when he was in search of a word, a meaning for his *Lexique roman*, one of his young workers, a native of Abbeville, entered the room, and, hearing the discussion, hit upon the word: 'Ah! the *Picard*! he has found it *all the same* (*cependant*),' exclaimed the worthy scholar with a singular expression of astonishment; his grey eyebrow flashed a look of wily malice and raillery; even this word of commendation which escaped from him could not conceal the disdain of the Provençal for the Picardian. 'He has found it *all the same*!' all the

passion and prejudice of Raynouard the scholar lurks in this single word *dependant*.

He showed his origin also in his gay humour, his wit, his little jests. Rabelais wrote one of his most laughable tales about a nun of Brignoles; while refuting the tale in his *Notice sur Brignoles*, Raynouard recalls the fact that Rabelais passed through his native town. In the freedom of familiar intercourse he had a grain of the old Gallic humour, heightened on those occasions by the Provençal smack of garlic. There was much of the sixteenth-century scholar in Raynouard. Little epigrams of his are quoted in the style of Martial, like those indulged in by Maynard and La Monnoye. In his younger days, in the intervals of his professional duties as a lawyer, he would write French poems somewhat after the fashion of the Latin poems of the Chancellor de L'Hôpital (not as a rule either very good or very poetic); and, apropos of de L'Hôpital, he takes care not to forget the passage in the illustrious Chancellor's account of his journey to Nice, where he celebrates the Brignoles district and especially its excellent plums 'whose renown has spread throughout the whole world.' M. Raynouard was never so pleased as when he regaled his Parisian friends with the Brignoles plums.

After a successful school career at the little Seminary at Aix, and having taken his degrees at the Law School of that town, he went to Paris about 1784; only to spy out the land however, and not to stay. He had at that time nothing to recommend him to that brilliant, elegant and effeminate society. Honest and astute, he felt that Paris was not his sphere; enamoured of Letters, but in the antique fashion, he resolved, in order to be some day in a position to cultivate them with independence, to return to his own country and settle down as a barrister and man of business. Jacob served seven years, followed by another seven years, to win Rachel, the woman of his heart. Raynouard's love of Letters was that of a patriarch, robust and full-blooded, proof against time: so he went back and spent seven years as a practising and consulting barrister at Draguignan; then, after a forced interruption, he returned to the same life for another five or six years.

A man of his serious and sober mind, and his warm and ardent heart, could not remain indifferent to the move-

ment of 1789 : he cherished the hopes of the Revolution, he repudiated only its excesses, and ever clung to its essential principles, which he afterwards, in his somewhat specialised learning, took a pleasure in confounding with the heritage of the old municipal liberties bequeathed by the Romans.

If it is true, as has been asserted, that Raynouard wrote his Memoirs, the possessors of the document should be invited to publish them, in order to clear up this first half of his life, only a few particulars of which are known. Appointed in 1791 a Deputy's substitute to the Legislative Assembly, Raynouard's public duties then took him back to Paris, and he had at the same time an eye to anything that might assist him in his secret desire to make his way in literature. But the moment was not propitious. Young, honest, and generous, Raynouard in his turn became involved in the universal storm. After the fall of the Girondists he had returned to his province. He was brought back a prisoner on a cart and cast into the prison of the Abbey. It was in that place, or immediately after leaving it, that, profiting by the forced idleness which the Reign of Terror afforded him, he wrote his first tragedy, *Caton d'Utique* (*Cato of Utica*), of which very few copies are said to have been printed.

I have a copy before me, bearing the date of the year II (1794), and for motto the words of Seneca : *Inter ruinas publicas erectum*. The subject of Cato is quite cut out for an opposition subject. It is a long time since, in the reign of Domitian, a Roman advocate named Maternus read to applauding audiences his tragedy of *Cato*, many points of which offended the powers. Raynouard too, taking Cato for his theme, only sought occasion to protest against the tyrants of the day, and to enforce, but only for his own benefit, a few lessons in stoicism. The play, which is written in three acts, and without any love episode or female character, is merely a piece of rather solid and sententious declamation. In the first scene of the first act we may distinguish a rather fine and sensible passage which is put into the mouth of Brutus, and which shows how the Romans had fallen away from their liberties through their lack of morals, and henceforth deserved their slavery. In other respects the play is conceived in that stiff, rude, stilted and bombastic style, which some-

times recalls the tone and the trick, but not the genius, of Corneille.

The time had not yet come for Raynouard to make his debut in literature; he bravely returned to his own country to resume the practice of his profession as barrister, and to repair the ravages which this interruption had made in his small fortune. He desired only the strictest necessary in order to be independent: an income of a thousand crowns, no more: 'I am a philosopher, he would say (and when I quote his words, you must imagine them heightened and doubled as it were by his accent); a philosopher needs nothing but his wallet and his cloak; but the wallet must be full and the cloak must be neat.'

As soon as he has acquired the necessary, he returns to Paris under the Consulate, and this time he is fully resolved not to give in again. It is remarkable that this long and unequal division of himself between business and literature has anything but cooled his ardour for the latter. Though more than forty years of age, Raynouard entered upon this career with the ardour of a young man and with the steadiness of a veteran. The Institute, which was behind the times in respect of public events, had set for the subject of its prize for poetry (1803) this saying of Montaigne: '*Virtue is the basis of Republics.*' Raynouard competed and took the prize with a little poem (*Socrate dans le Temple d'Aglaure*) in which that aphoristic saying was transformed and put into action. This idea of turning the abstract subject into action and attributing its development to an historical character, is the only poetical thing about the poem. Nothing could be more prosaic and commonplace than the execution. Socrates delivers himself of Pibrac maxims. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre strangely attributed to the author some of his own qualities, when, on receiving him a few years later at the Academy, he said of this *Socrate dans le Temple d'Aglaure*: 'It is a picture arranged like a Poussin!' Never were words more misplaced.

But Raynouard's great, his incomparable success occurred at the Théâtre Français, on the performance (14 May 1805) of his tragedy of *Les Templiers*. When we read this play to-day, we wonder what was the reason of its success, and feel the necessity of accounting for it. At that period the interest shown in the stage was intense;

the public were tired of the Greeks and Romans, and it was some years since any successful novelties had been produced. 'For five years there seemed to have been a spell cast over tragedies and tragic dramatists, said Geoffroy: M. Raynouard has just broken the spell.' He broke it by means of a few good points mixed up with a great number of faults, but coming in at the right moment and striking home. Raynouard was not so far from the opportune as one might have supposed after seeing his rather rustic exterior, when he came upon the scene late and from a distance, walking rather heavily in his thick boots.

Three times in his life, on three memorable occasions, he seized the right and opportune moment.

The first time in his *Templiers*. He invented nothing, but he broke that wearisome line of antique and mythological tragedies and, like Belloy, he appeared to open a vein and create a new fashion, the national historical play. It led to nothing, but it was a brilliant beginning, and people imagined they saw in it the raising of a banner.

The second time was in politics. Raynouard seized the occasion, or rather he did not miss it. In December 1813, having been appointed a member of the Committee of the Legislative Body which was to report on the state of the negotiations begun with the powers, he dared, with Lainé, Gallois, Flaugergues and Maine de Biran, to openly voice, in face of the Emperor, a word of liberty and complaint. This word of a single day, the first after so long and profound a silence, was enough to bear his name as a citizen to posterity and to inscribe it on the annals of history.¹

Lastly, in 1816, by the publication of the first volume of his work on the Troubadours, he took precedence, both in respect of time and position, of all the others, of Fauriel and Wilhelm von Schlegel, who might have anticipated him; he raised his banner in time to reap the honours and the fruits of his labour. But this was not a transitory act, it was a capture and a conquest. He had discovered his province and he reigned in it.

¹ M. Thiers, in the 18th volume of his *History of the Consulate and the Empire*, noted a second memorable parliamentary day in M. Raynouard's political life; the day in 1814 when he presented to the Chamber his report on the Press Law. The historian made it the occasion of writing one of his finest pages.

I will return to the *Templars*. Two very judicious criticisms on this play may be read, one in Geoffroy's feuilletons, the other in the *Conversations of Napoleon* (*Mémoires de M. de Bausset*):¹

'This play as a whole appeared to me very cold, says Napoleon, because there is nothing in it that either comes from or goes to the heart. The author, forgetting the true object of tragedy, which is to touch the heart or excite emotion, was too much taken up with having an opinion on a matter which will always be enveloped in darkness, because it is impossible to shed any light upon it. How should it be possible, after five centuries, to decide whether the Templars were innocent or guilty, when contemporary authors are divided on the point, or rather positively contradict each other? All that we can say is that it was a monstrous and inexplicable business. It is equally hard to believe that the Templars were altogether innocent and that they were altogether perverse. Can it then be so painful to remain in doubt, when it is very evident that with all our researches we cannot *arrange* a satisfactory result?'

This preliminary observation on the subject, and ~~in~~ the manner in which Raynouard regarded it, is very just and will appear so to all who read the tragedy and the historical proofs which follow in its train. Nothing could be less convincing than all the author's pleading in favour of the Templars: he tries to throw all the onus upon their accusers, upon the spirit of an ignorant age, and he gives us no picture either of that age or of that proud and scandalous Order, which must in many ways have shared the coarseness and vices of that age; he does not approach the actual accusations themselves, but always blames the unjust, illegal and cruel manner in which certain confessions were forced from the members. In a word, he pleads for the Templars as if he were a barrister pleading before the Court of Cassation to obtain the quashing of a sentence. Napoleon (it is not every day that we have a feuilletoniste of his calibre), analysing the play, remarks that, whilst remaining faithful to history and tradition, the author might have stamped his tragedy with a power and a dramatic colour which he totally lacked:

'The character of Philippe le Bel, he thinks, as a violent, headstrong prince, carried away by all his passions, absolute in all his wishes, implacable in his resentments, and excessively jealous of his authority, which is that assigned to him by history, might have been adapted for stage purposes. Instead of that, M. Raynouard, otherwise a very estimable and talented author, represents him as a cold man, an impassive

¹ See also the book entitled, *Napoleon, ses Opinions et Jugements*, by the Damas-Hinards (1838); it is a very carefully prepared collection, and very convenient to consult.

friend of justice, who has no cause either to love or hate the Templars, who trembles before an Inquisitor, and who seems, as a matter of form only, to demand of the Templars an act of submission and respect.'

Napoleon, who was a judge of heroes and knew the stuff they are made of, insists upon this point that the hero of a tragedy should not be a hero from top to toe, that, in order to interest, he ought to remain human; and on this point Napoleon, unsuspectingly and thinking he is merely classical, approaches the point of view of Shakespeare, who always depicts men, and not heroes:

'The author, he says, appears above all to have forgotten a classical maxim, which is based upon a real knowledge of the human heart; that is, that the hero of a tragedy, in order to interest, should be neither altogether guilty nor altogether innocent. Without departing from historical truth he might have applied this principle to the Grand Master of the Templars; but he has tried to represent him as a model of ideal perfection, and this ideal perfection on the stage always leaves the spectator cold and indifferent. Instead of that, he only needed to say, what is quite true, that the Grand Master had had the weakness to confess, either through fear, or through the hope of saving his Order, and then to represent him, by a happy return of courage and virtue, as restored to his sense of honour, and retracting his first confessions at the sight of the stake that awaits him. Unfortunately the heart of man harbours every kind of weakness and contradiction, and these afford eminently tragic colours. . . .'

Then he criticises Marigni, the young lover, the object of whose affection is not known and can excite no interest, who is always on the point of dying, as an excrescence and of no use to the action. The Grand Master and he were however the two interesting characters, the one dramatic and grand, the other made pathetic under the features of the actor Talma.

Geoffroy criticised with intelligence and good sense a few of the most approved catchwords of the play, such as the famous hemistich: *Sire, ils étaient trois mille*. The young Marigni, to exalt the Templars and arouse admiration for their valour, relates to the King how a body of Templars, besieged within the walls of a city and unable to withstand a superior force, surrender to the Musulmans; the victor tries to make them abjure, he insults them, he threatens them, all to no purpose:

Intrépides encor dans ce nouveau danger,
Tous marchent à la mort d'un pas ferme et tranquille;
On les égorgea tous: Sire, ils étaient trois mille.

These words were the signal for a burst of applause. But a moment's reflection will make it clear that, though in

this case the number of the Templars enhances the idea of their faith and belief, since not one of this large number was faithless to his God, it greatly diminishes the idea of their bravery, since it did not prevent their surrendering. The much-applauded half-line is at least as much an epigram upon the three thousand who capitulated as a eulogy of the same three thousand who refused to abjure their faith.

Having said so much, and having added that the texture of the style is devoid of real brilliancy and novelty, being composed *ad nauseam* of all the conventionally vague, common, declamatory words (*ignominie, vertu, gloire, victoire, des proscrits vertueux*, etc. *Quel trouble impétueux s'élève dans mes sens !* etc., etc.); having convinced ourselves that the author had not read his Villehardouin before making his knights speak, we are fain to greet and applaud with the pit a few fine lines, whose effect is enhanced by the situation, five or six hemistichs which re-echo a little of Corneille's sublimity, a cry of innocence raised in the last scenes, and the very fine concluding narrative of the execution.

Les chants avaient cessé ! this is one of the memorable catchwords of the stage. Meyerbeer, that great dramatist who thinks of everything, was not the man to neglect an effect which belonged so entirely to the domain of music, and, when Scribe called his attention to it, he made it an admirable motive in the last act of his *Huguenots*, where Valentin, listening to the singing that issues from the church, notes with anguish all the alternations :

... Ils chantent encor ! . . .
Ils ne chantent plus !

I know not if there was much calculation, or if there was not more good luck about this first performed of Raynouard's tragedies, but it is impossible to be less lavish of new resources than he was, and to get a happier effect out of the four or five phrases or hemistichs which decided the triumph of his play. He was sparing of the sublime, but, of the little he put into it, nothing was lost. And so he did not cease later to attach great importance on all occasions to what he called the *mise en scène* (staging). He knew how well it had served him.

The few odes and lyric poems of his that we have are

very prosaic, very commonplace. One day somebody presumed to represent to him that 'perhaps these two or three lines of a verse were rather feeble.'—'But, my friend, he replied, if I made them stronger, the last line would appear less fine.' It was this system of *poetic economy* which made the *Templiers* a success, but he did not enjoy this success a second time.

On another occasion a distinguished writer read a tragedy to him.—'That is very good, he said after hearing it, but it wants the *lash of the whip*. Now, I have this *lash of the whip*.' He said that Corneille had the *lash of the whip*. That is a witty expression which would be an acquisition to treatises on Rhetoric, in order to define famous phrases like the *Moi!* of the *Médée*, the *Qu'il mourût!* of *Les Horaces*, the *Sire, ils étaient trois mille!* of the *Templiers*. Take note of the expression, and write it, if you like, on the margin of Longinus' *Treatise of the Sublime*.

The famous lines spoken by Queen Jeanne to the King, in order to invalidate the seriousness of the confessions forced from the Templars :

La torture interroge, et la douleur répond ;

this line had occurred to Raynouard on the occasion of a suppression demanded by the Censure. He was very pleased with it, and liked to tell how he discovered it : 'Ah! don't tell me after that, he would say with a touch of irony, that the Censure is not good for something!'

After the success of the *Templiers*, Raynouard thought he had discovered a new vein, and that he had nothing more to do but vary its examples and applications. In his Reception Address at the French Academy (24 November 1807), we see him putting his theory to the test. He treated the question of tragedy considered in its influence upon the national spirit: he tried to prove that the tragedy of the Ancients, that of the Greeks, had a political foundation. At Athens that was the case from the beginning; in Rome, tragedy, a late importation, the outcome of study alone, had no influence on the national spirit. In France it was Corneille, Corneille alone, who re-erected, as Raynouard expressed it, *the Temple of Melpomene*; such phrases, which are inappropriate and contrary to good taste, detracted from the very theory he

was trying to enthrone. In this style however, which is alternately commonplace and abrupt, and certainly inelegant, we may distinguish a rather eloquent passage where the speaker declares his predilection for Corneille. Imagining a solemn competition between the poets of all nations, every nation being entitled to nominate only one representative, Raynouard exclaims :

'The Greeks would elect Homer; the Latins, Virgil; the Italians, Tasso or Ariosto (I should say rather *Dante*); the English, Milton (read rather *Shakespeare*); and we all—yes, even you who can admire Racine . . . ah! in the peril of our literary fame, a single cry would arise, and that cry you utter with me: *Corneille!*'

This Address of Raynouard is remarkable moreover for its brief, staccato style, the very opposite of the periodic style. Each paragraph is almost invariably composed of a single sentence. The orator is always making a fresh start. In this first Academic discourse, as later in the Reports which Raynouard wrote in his capacity of Permanent Secretary, we see too many of the old habits of the consulting and practising barrister. When he composes his prose works, such as his *Histoire du Droit municipal en France* (1829), he does little more than arrange and classify in chronological order the notes he has gathered in his researches; he merely empties his brief-bag and arranges his materials by chapters, with as little connexion as possible. When young authors consulted him on their writings, he advised them to cut up their periods: 'Do not write long sentences, that only causes confusion.' This method, indeed, cuts short a difficulty, but does not solve it. Raynouard, though a good and ingenious grammarian, was anything but an able writer; he never became a master in the art of writing.

In this Reception Address at the Academy we find a eulogy of Napoleon, which deserves attention only because afterwards Raynouard found himself one day in direct opposition and conflict with him. Speaking of what the poet Le Brun, his predecessor in the Academy, might have done if he had lived long enough to attempt Napoleon's apotheosis in verse, Raynouard added :

'The singer of Napoleon should have represented him, in accordance with history, as great above kings, just as Homer, in accordance with tradition, represented Jupiter as great above Gods; ruling the universe by the authority of his thought, ever ready to grasp with his all-powerful

hand one of the ends of the chain of the Fates, if all his enemies together dared to hold on to the other, and always certain to drag them all to his side.'

It was surely difficult to say more, even in an Academic compliment. It sufficed to prove that Raynouard, an honest man and a patriot at heart, endowed moreover with character when circumstances demanded it, was anything but a Republican after the manner of Cato.

'He is an eccentric and above all an independent Provençal,' we must still abide by this definition of him which Fontanes gave the Emperor.¹

In the years that followed, Raynouard tried to force his tragic vein by applying himself to national historical subjects: he gave *Les États de Blois* (1810),² which he afterwards published with numerous appendices and illustrations; but he had not the same luck. The truth is that a prolonged success on the stage does not follow such or such a class of play which is thought to be new, but only the talent which animates and fertilises a class or a subject. M. Raynouard's talent for tragedy was in part real, but unfruitful and limited: he had the good sense to see it. He did not wait to be warned a second time, before

¹ It has since been attempted to laud Raynouard for a bold passage in his Academic Address: speaking of one Emilius Scaurus who, in a tragedy of *Atreus*, had imitated some lines of Euripides, in which the informers detected and denounced some political allusion, the new member said: 'Scaurus received the order to die, and resigned himself with courage: *Tiberius was reigning.*' M. de Feletz, in his report of the sitting, remarked with pleasure that these words which Raynouard uttered with a loud voice, were drowned by applause: 'It was a bold stroke in 1807,' he adds in a note. We have just seen that, if it was a bold stroke, Raynouard thought it his duty immediately after to redeem it with a piece of enormous praise: it would have been much better to avoid either extreme. But in these Academical sittings, after all, the main thing is to be applauded.—The *Moniteur* of the 29 November 1807, which contains the whole of Raynouard's speech, seems to hint that the man in power at the time accepted only the praise, and he was right.

² This tragedy in five acts and verse was first performed on the 22 June 1810, at Saint-Cloud, before the Emperor, 'who, before allowing it to be played at the Théâtre-Français, desired it to be given at Court.' Stanislas Girardin, who records this fact, adds, after giving a detailed analysis of the play: 'A passably strange thing it is to have seen it performed before the Emperor. It is likely that it will not be given at Paris. The objections to having it performed there were explained forcibly and with truth to the Emperor by the Prince of Neuchâtel. The Emperor appeared convinced, and said that having once been mistaken in reading a tragedy, he would henceforth not allow any to be played that had not been first performed at the Court theatre.' (*Journal et Souvenirs* of Stanislas Girardin, vol. ii, p. 392).

placing himself on the shelf, as he expressed it. When it was afterwards proposed to revive *Les Templiers* at the Théâtre-Français without Talma, he put in his veto. 'I am going to applaud your *Templiers* this evening, somebody said to him one morning, after seeing it advertised.' — 'You will not go, and you will not see it,' he immediately replied: 'I am not such a fool, and have no desire to be hissed.' And after this first ebullition, according to his wont, he seriously stated his reasons.

In 1814 he had already fully entered upon the paths of learning, where his true fame awaited him. He had hardly been admitted to the French Academy, when he thought of the means of correcting and improving the Dictionary, and this idea led him to investigate the origins of the language; then he was insensibly led on to search the remains of the old Troubadours, and so on, as the horizon widened out before him, he discovered quite a world.

The study of the old Provençal language was at that time very little cultivated, and M. Raynouard was able to say in 1815 to Wilhelm von Schlegel, who was engaged in the same study, 'that he could not count more than five persons in France who knew the classical Provençal': Schlegel, Fauriel, de Rochegude, Raynouard, there we have four; and it would have been hardly possible to find more than one other.

I can only point out from a distance the field in which Raynouard laboured, in which he was a pioneer and discoverer. Let the reader try to picture in thought the condition of old France, of Gaul, at the time when the Roman rule was breaking up on all sides, when the barbarians, the Visigoths, the Burgundians, the Franks invaded that country. The Roman language, the Latin, which was spoken in all the towns and the environs of the towns, ceased to be the language of administration and to be regularly spoken. Rustic dialects reappeared and took the upper hand: they came into collision with the languages spoken by the conquerors, and even though they triumphed they became discomposed. It was between the fifth and tenth centuries that this great mixing took place, the silent labour and *grinding up* as it were which resulted in the modern dialects. Who can explain exactly the mystery of this formation? There are things which are

not written down. The peculiarity of rustic,* vulgar, popular language is that it is practised without being written. We can at most seize some indications, some unexpected vestiges that slip into the writings of another order, and thus reach us quite by chance.

It was these vestiges, these four or five words scattered here and there among Latin texts, those few sentences in dialect which were collected more or less accurately by historians who did not trouble themselves about the point of accuracy, that M. Raynouard endeavoured to discover, to compare, to closely examine, and which served as his starting-point. No man was more able than he to make the most of the smallest details. Now, it seemed to him that these first indications of the modern language which cropped up in the Latin authors, belonged to his language of the South rather than to the future French of the North; he immediately concluded that his dear Provençal dialect had at first extended much higher and further North than it was afterwards able to maintain itself. This first idea, founded indeed on such slender proofs, that sensible people new to the question would smile if I could expound them to them; this first idea was so precious to him, that he pictured to himself quite a system based upon it, to wit, that from the sixth to the ninth centuries, in the interval between the rule of the Visigoths and that of Charlemagne, a *single* Romance language had formed itself and was spoken in France, the type and the matrix of all the others that have since come into existence, and serving as a *mediator* between all those dialects and Latin. Thus, the language of the South of France, of the Provençals, that of Brignoles, was at first, according to Raynouard's theory, the mother of Old French as a whole, as well as of the Catalanian, the Spanish, the Italian and the Portuguese languages, instead of being merely a sister, formed a little earlier, if you like, and more precociously endowed, but by no means invested with that dignity of a mother and a begetter.

I point out the weak point of the system, what has been called *the spoiled child* of Raynouard's learning, but, whilst following and caressing this spoiled child, the hard-working and judicious scholar went on deciphering manuscripts, collecting old texts, discovering charming poems; he even discovered, though he said little about, or at least

only incidentally mentioned them, grammars in the old language, in which the rules of the ancient speech of the Troubadours were accurately indicated: he made skilful use of them to enunciate those rules, to discover them, to restore order and regularity where, at first sight, one would be tempted to see only chance and confusion. Lastly, after collecting in six volumes dissertations, grammar, chosen texts, the whole treasure of the Troubadours, and preparing six other volumes of *Lexicon*, part of which only appeared after his death, he did more, he crossed the Loire, not as a conqueror this time, but as an auxiliary, and condescended even to us Picards and Normans; he verified and applied to our Old French language the same essential grammatical rules that he had discovered in the old language of the South, and proved that our good old authors of the twelfth century did not write at random and anyhow;¹ so that all who are now occupied with the publication of ancient texts at once take M. Raynouard for their guide and rule. Even the contradictions he provokes do not touch his real merit; for nobody has raised and put into circulation a greater number of materials and instruments than he did for twenty years.

He was withal a kind man under his rough exterior, loyal though shrewd, a sincere friend of studies and those who cultivate them, holding aloof from all intrigues, and keeping himself free from the hatreds and angers which only too often poison and dishonour learning. Apropos of an offensive and immoderate quarrel which was raised by a young, impetuous scholar against the worthy M. Fauriel, Raynouard wrote at the end of a review of a publication by that young savant in the *Journal des Savants* (August and September 1833):

'But in these researches, in these discussions in which young men are called upon to take part equally with us veteran students, let us, both young and old, never forget that it is a question of discussing and not of disputing. Voltaire said with as much wit as reason:

De nos cailloux frottés il sort des étincelles.

We should strike our flints then to make them emit useful sparks; but let us take care not to throw them at each other's heads.'

These witty touches are rare in his written criticisms: he usually kept them for his conversation. But on this

¹ *Observations sur le Roman de Rou, 1829.*

occasion a keen sense of justice made him write as he might have spoken.

He used to say rather amusingly, to signify that he did not always and everywhere write the best that he had in his mind: 'When I have a good idea, I am not such a fool as to put it into the *Journal des Savants*, I keep it for myself.' The many articles he published in that Journal would indeed only too well verify those words and that method of reserve and economy: they are judicious, but generally composed of bits and morsels, and are not of much importance.

Very skilful and discriminate in the details and the exercise of words, very powerful and consistent in his labours taken as a whole, Raynouard, a good grammarian with some flashes of philological genius, was, I may venture to say, lacking in the elevated philosophical idea which embraces, which naturally links all the bearings of a subject, and which Fauriel and Wilhelm von Schlegel, as savants, understood much better than he. Three times and on three occasions I detected in Raynouard the same fault in reasoning, the same wrong bent: the first time, in relation to the supposed absolute innocence of the Templars; the second time, in relation to the supposed universality of the primitive Romance language; the third time, in relation to the supposed uninterrupted continuity of municipal institutions. In these three cases he proceeded in the same way, grasping a few points of the question, clinging to them with sagacity and a stubborn affection, and concluding from the particular to the general, untroubled by any awkward obstacles, but throwing them over. There is something brief, broken, not sufficiently open and extended in his reasoning as in his sentence. He had corners, but no *ensemble*. This defect, which was not sufficiently corrected by his good sense and his accuracy in details, appears to me to be essential to the form of his mind.

Such as he was, he rendered great services and exercised a useful influence. He was one of the last of that race of former days who inspired all who came near with respect and affection. People would smile at the *bonhomme* Raynouard, but they saw his vigorous nature, they acknowledged him as a master and loved him. Many amusing stories could be told about him, and it would need

a Fontenelle to tell them with a proper discretion. During his last years he lived in retirement at Passy, engaged in study, rising early, and complaining of not being able to continue his work in the evening: 'Ah! he would say regretfully, if I had been able to work after dinner, I could have produced encyclopedias.' In 1829 he resigned his functions as Permanent Secretary to the French Academy, either to gain more time for study, or for some reason which he did not tell. He was unmarried. One day somebody said to him in reference to I know not what work: 'You could do it if you would, Monsieur Raynouard; you can do whatever you will to do.'—'Ah! my dear friend, he replied, there is one thing however that I have never been able to do, that is to marry. I once had a good mind to do so. But going to the house of my intended, I entered by way of the kitchen, where the domestic had just allowed the milk to boil over, and she was scolding her, but in such a tone that I said to myself: Not this time.' One should imagine the accent which accompanied the telling.

He was supposed to be excessively parsimonious: time has revealed the secret of his generosity to his family, and more than one deliberate and well-contrived act of kindness. 'Do anything to preserve, nothing to acquire,' he said one day to a friend whose eyes were rather mechanically fixed upon an old carpet in his room.

He died on the 26 October 1836, at the age of seventy-five. Old as he was, his constitution seemed to promise a greater age. We have all met him, during his last years, coming from Passy, already weak and bent, hastening from the Institute to Crapelet's printing-office, correcting his proofs himself, quite absorbed in the work and the business that had brought him to town, the publication of his *Lexicon*. His usual dress consisted of knee-breeches, grey worsted stockings, a maroon coat, and broad-brimmed hat, which with his white hair gave him something of the appearance of Benjamin Franklin. He was eager, familiar and brusque; his expressive physiognomy was animated by a keen eye under a shrewd and cautious eyebrow.

JULES JANIN :

Monday, 13 October 1851.

For these two years past I have been uninterruptedly conversing with my indulgent readers, and, like every schoolboy who is worth his salt, I should very much like an occasional week's holiday. It shall be my rest and holiday this week, if you please, to speak around and about a book which has just been published by one of our friends and comrades-in-arms, who is also a friend of the public, M. Janin. It is an easy task, since all the world this time knows as much about it as we do, and is anticipating us. M. Janin, as is well known, is not satisfied with writing those feuilletons in which he collects so many light and airy things, since many a serious thing chances to be caught in the folds of his gauze. This twenty years' chase after bees and butterflies has been successful ; his ardour for writing is not yet exhausted ; he is so fond of his profession and his art, he is so much in his element, that the work which would have disabled any other, has the effect of keeping him in better trim and fighting condition. Thus we saw him last year publishing his *Religieuse de Toulouse*, in which with his gravest air he traversed a corner of the reign of Louis XIV. To-day, under the title of *Les Gaietés champêtres*, he returns to the period of Louis XV, and yields with more exuberance than ever to his instinctive taste for style, imagination and colour. Every time I read a page, a chapter or a book by M. Janin, I say to myself : This is not a book, it is a nature.

The Preface of the *Gaietés* is addressed to Dr. Prosper Ménière, a friend of the author. Pass over the parentheses, step over the two or three apologues, which complicate the path, and we find in the Preface not only some graceful details, but a well-considered idea. The following idea is to my mind a very sensible one : that light and pleasing

¹ *Les Gaietés champêtres*, by M. Jules Janin.

things have the right to exist not only by the side of great things, but also on the morrow after terrible conflicts, and even in the shortest lucid intervals afforded by social revolutions. There is no lack of serious, sober and estimable persons who, because society has just escaped one peril and is about to face another, would rally all around them in the fray, discipline them and impose upon every writer a mission, a faction in the common work. Far from me the idea that the literary writer should remain indifferent at certain times, that he should speak to the public on days of universal excitement without loudly voicing his wishes, his emotions, his generous sympathies! It is not these times that we are thinking of, but the morrow and the intervals, in a word the ordinary flow of the literary life. Can there exist outside the various political systems, on the confines of conflicting and warring doctrines, a more or less neutral ground, a sort of *borderland*, where one is welcome to roam for a moment, to dream, to remember things that are as old and yet as eternally young as the world, the spring, the sun, love, youth; to wander even (if youth is past) with a book in one's hand, and to live with an author of a past age, ready to rave about him for a whole day and on returning to town to ask everybody one meets: *Have you read him?* M. Janin asserts this right, and I assert it with him, though I have not such good reasons for doing so, since I have long almost ceased to associate, even distantly, with the spring or youth; but I hold that the roamer and dreamer has ever a right to read the old book, though it were the most indifferent to our quarrels of the day, and to become absorbed in it for a moment.

Once again, I admit that this right to wander in the woods, which belongs to every free and living, and not too prosaic, literature, is suspended in times of storm, of civil tempest, in those frightful moments of conflict which we have too often witnessed; but, on the morrow, the sun rises, the clouds part; hearts are still in a flutter and downcast, but the right which I call the literary right begins again. It is, I admit, more restricted after these frightful crises; the green tract where he can wander in thought and seek unexpected inspiration is narrowed in; only gradually does it extend, and in proportion as tranquillity returns to the cities and the souls of men. But

the essential point is that this rather undefined, though very real, right should never be suppressed, and that the reigning doctrines should never, even in the name of common security, say to the poet, the *littérateur*, the curious scholar, as the military engineer on the outskirts of a fortress says to the honest man with his little farm, his little wood and his running stream: 'Sir, we want this little bit of ground which you are so fond of: it is within our lines, we need it; here is your price, be content, but you shall not re-enter into its possession.'

Those who live by Letters, by the love of books and studies, by those after all harmless and disinterested passions, may for a moment yield this bit of their being and lend it to the public weal and the public thought, they must do so in urgent cases; but, when the case ceases, they re-enter with full right into their domain.

This domain is a certain honest freedom, difficult to define but very easy to feel, by reason of which we belong to no party, we are not ever on the offensive and defensive, we seek the good, the beautiful and the agreeable in more than one sphere, we hold our minds open like our windows to the entering sunbeam, the passing bird, the smiling morn. This is true not only for poetry, but for criticism and for every form of thought. Human life, history, nature, are surely wider than they appear to be when habitually seen only through the slits of a battlement or through the embrasure from which rises the smoke of a gun. Oh! it was not thus that Montaigne envisaged the world from his tower at Montaigne, or La Fontaine in his daily reveries, on the edge of the corn-fields, in the shade of the woods.

Those who believe that there is only one truth, not only in morals, but in religion, in politics, in everything, who imagine they possess this truth and can demonstrate it to all by clear and manifest signs, would like at every moment to keep literature within the exact lines they have traced out for it; but as in every period there are various kinds of robust and important minds (I am not speaking of charlatans and impostors) who think they possess this only and absolute truth, and who would equally impose it on others, as these minds are at war and in opposition to each other, it follows that literature, poetic or studious free thought, thus pulled in different

directions, would be greatly at a loss in its choice of submission. It has therefore only one course to take : in times when it is absolutely obliged to make its choice of banners, to adopt that which appears most like the banner of the cause it believes to be the right one ; then, at all other times, to return within itself, within its own less military and less strategical paths, and follow the border of those paths, where meditation, fancy, study have ever loved to meet ; in a word, one or other of the Muses, now gracious, now severe.

Well ! in his Preface, in the dedication to his friend Dr. Ménière, M. Janin says very well something of all this. He compares himself making his book to a man in good health and with leisure who, being already well off, goes in the spring-time to purchase, on a pleasant hill-side away from the city, a modest little estate where he may take his airing when he feels inclined that way. 'D', you think, he says, that this man begins by inquiring what the garden yields ? He thinks himself repaid, and more than repaid, if he finds a few flowers in the beds, a few forgotten fruits on the trees, a little shade in the summer, a warm sunray in the autumn. He expects no more, he does not complain of having been taken in by the seller. So it is with the books that we read or that we write.'

And he adds with excellent sense, which finds its own simple expression : ' We can expect of *belles-lettres* no other reward but a little comfort and hope ; and if the men and the minds I love are so fortunate as to share my reward, well ! I have nothing more to ask of my book.'

Remembering the prayers he has so often read in the Latin poets of his acquaintance, and combining them with his own, he thus composes his motto : ' Honest people, he says, addressing his friend the Doctor, of whom you are so perfect a model ! they adopted for their personal use this happy definition of felicity in a peaceful city : an easy task, contented poverty, an artless and serious joy, an honoured country, a mild climate, indulgent men and gods.'

With regard to the book itself which he announces, the author, I assure you, does not overrate himself, and he speaks of himself with modesty : it is, he says, ' a little tale in two big volumes.' But he has written it with joy,

with passion, with zeal too and *study*, as he himself admits. To write a *feuilleton* has become to him too easy, he wants to do something more, something that will cost him labour and pains: 'For after all, say the coquettes by profession, if there were not a little trouble, where would be the pleasure?' He admits his faults, but not as people very often do, by striking his cheek to stroke it the more, by confessing his little fault to hide the bigger one. By no means. He once happened to write a critique of himself which was most firm and severe. Somebody had borrowed from one of his novels, *Le Chemin de traverse*, the subject of a vaudeville: writing a notice of the first performance of this vaudeville (October 1848), M. Janin attacked his own novel in a direct, analytical, piquant manner which did not by any means, I assure you, look like a pretence. He analysed all the elements that go to the making of a novel and confronted himself with some of the novelists of the day and acknowledged them as his superiors. If our praise of the criticism appears to detract from his merits as a novelist, it grants him all the more as a critic.

'This time again' he speaks of his present work with freedom and perfect candour: 'In writing a book, he says, I confess that I must find what I want, to wit: pains and labour, cadence and study. I require the *tour*, the *détour* and the *contour*. Singularity suits me, subtlety I do not dislike; excess is a danger, a fine danger. . . . It is the privilege of the author, who seeks to please only for a moment, to seek above everything form, sound, noise, colour, ornament, prodigality, excess.' He is especially anxious about style; usually so fluent with his pen that if he only allows it to trot it will carry him away at an easy gallop, this time he has forced it to execute a thousand prances and curvets; more than once he has detected himself, in his effort, wiping his brow and biting his nails. He tells us this with a mixture of pride and modesty, whilst asking our pardon for what claims to be really no more than a mythological fable in the Louis XV style, a *patched idyll*, as he calls it.

To analyse this novel is precisely to take from it what the author intended to put into it, to lay bare the thread and present it without the embroidery. I will try, however, to give an idea of this often interrupted story

whose inspiration in the best parts appears to be to show all that is fresh, light, fugitive and forgetful in youth.

We are in the eighteenth century ; do not ask for a more precise date. Louison, a pretty girl of seventeen or eighteen, adorns the counter of the *Golden Scales*, a rather gloomy shop in the Rue Saint-Denis. She has no mother ; her father, a rich and miserly tradesman, appears to be as little a father as he can be. In the same house is a lawyer's office, with numerous clerks, wild and noisy. But the most dangerous for the pretty Louison is the third clerk, the steadiest and best-behaved of all, M. Eugène, who overhears her singing in the evenings, and steals blushing glances at her. 'To live in the shadow of the beauty we love, to look at her, to hear her, do you know a more beautiful life : an agitated and contented idleness, a leisure full of caprices ? . . . ' This M. Eugène, who has little liking for the law, and does not know his father, quite gives one the impression of being the son of some *grand seigneur* who has forgotten to acknowledge him, and has bequeathed him his instincts. One day, after an April dream, which speaks to him distinctly of his neighbour the fair Louison, he makes up his mind at last to declare his feelings, and to content himself no more with silent looks. He proposes, to begin with, that on the next fine Sunday morning they shall make a little excursion together to the Bois de Vincennes. The offer is no sooner made than accepted, and behold, on the appointed day, the two young people are up with the dawn and on their way.

It is all very simple as we see ; it is the opening of *Manon Lescaut*, or of *Daphnis* and *Chloe* living in the Rue Saint-Denis, and of so many other novels in which passion does not go to such lengths ; it is the beginning of all facile amours. M. Janin, who intervenes at every moment and makes a third with his lovers, relieves these nothings by all the fresh and pretty pen-touches at his command : a rosy cheek, a drop of dew on the brow, sparkling laughter, the natural buoyancy and freedom of youth. He understands to perfection, and without emphasising it too much, all that naïve devilry of the senses in lovers of seventeen.

These lovers moreover, who are wandering from Paris to Vincennes, leave nothing behind that might call them

back, not a relation, not a regret. They appear to have started for a walk in the wood ; but with them as with the author, the idea comes with walking as the appetite comes with eating, they go on without even a thought of turning back, and with no expressed intention of going farther. They just wander on, straight before them, as in the days of Eve they might have wandered in the garden of the world.

However, one cannot walk for ever ; a vehicle overtakes them, a cart drawn by a sturdy little horse and driven by a polite rustic, who engages them in conversation. Eugène remembers that somewhere in Brie, at the Château of Fontenay, he has a friend, one Hubert, son of the manager of the estate. The cart is going that way ; he mounts with Louison, who never says *no* to anything, and the romance continues.

Up and down hill they go ; that is the pleasure of this kind of progress. The driver stops for an hour for rest and refreshment at a wayside inn ; there is a spring in the courtyard : ' While the landlord and the driver were drinking the stirrup-cup : " Let us drink the stirrup-cup," said Louise to her lover. *And behold them both bending over the runnel of the fountain, receiving that fresh water into their fresh and rosy throats. . .* ' These pages of Janin could furnish many similar subjects for vignettes by Johannot.

As they are slowly moving up-hill near Chenevières, they pass in front of the terrace of a chateau. This chateau belongs to a financier, and the terrace is at this moment peopled by the élite of the most elegant and foppish society of Paris and Versailles. Our lovers have been seen from afar, and spied, quite unsuspecting of witnesses, in their love-making. Louison is one of those that you cannot keep your eyes off, when once you have seen them. Soon the lovers are obliged to pass along the foot of the terrace, under a fire of eye-glasses and banter. To make matters worse, the perilous crossing is prolonged by an accident to the cart. Eugène chafes under the ordeal ; Louison, who has the coquetry natural to every daughter of Eve, is soon comforted, and proud if anything of that triumph mingled with malice and insolence. She receives in passing many a gallant speech, many an embroidered kerchief, many a diamond pin and Maltese

cross, which rain down from the mad company on the terrace that a sudden wager has put into a merry mood. Before disappearing at the bend of the road, she even looks back a last time and waves a farewell to the company with her handkerchief.

Henceforth, whatever Eugène may do, however lucky he may think himself, it is very clear that his Manon, though she should love him as much as the other Manon did her Des Grieux, will not be faithful. But Eugène is in happy ignorance; he appears to be one of those who, as long as they enjoy the present, care little about eternity.

The cart, however, reaches the plain and they are in Brie. Night is falling, the driver is approaching his home, but a shrewish wife prevents his offering hospitality to the young couple. He contents himself with directing them on their way to the Château of Fontenay, where dwells Eugène's friend.

And here they are, these two who only this morning left the Rue Saint-Denis, tramping in a beautiful night along a deep road to reach the plain, and thence across open country, in search of the country-house they hardly expect to find. The whole description of this walk, in silence, at random, in the dark, abounds with pretty details. The author lavishes, according to his wont, mythological images, allusions of every kind: but here, in the silence of a beautiful night, they are more natural and in place, and more compatible with reality.

Do you know Virgil's *Morietum*? It is a rustic idyll borrowed from real life, and perhaps imitated from the Greek, in which the poet introduces a poor labourer rising before the dawn and, before going to work, laboriously preparing his frugal dish composed of garlic and other ingredients: it is the dish that was called *Morietum*. M. Janin has given us a happy imitation of this idyll, and this passage of his novel would have been more remarked if it had been less mixed up with the other mythological and fanciful imitations which precede and follow. But imagine the story throughout in a simple and truthful tone, picture to yourself our lovers in difficulties, in the open country, in this night march, seeking for an hour or two their invisible château. The author continues and says:

'So they arrived, she and he, at the outskirts of a group of inhabited houses; all was asleep, except the clock and the cock, who tell the hours

to the stars. Roused by the crowing of the fowl, the *bonhomme* Hilaire, who lives in a hovel and cultivates a little adjoining field, yawns and shakes the sleep out of his eyes; regretfully he quits his hard bed, dresses in the dark, and, going to his cold hearth, tries to raise a spark of last night's fire.

Soon, by zealous blowing, the old man rekindles the forgotten flame sufficiently to light his lamp, renewed by a little oil poured out with sparing hand; the feeble glimmer hardly fills a dark corner of the hovel.—Come, to work, my poor Hilaire! you are alone, make your week's stock of bread. There was still a remnant of brown flour at the bottom of the goat-skin sack; he shakes it out into the kneading-trough, where ferments a little leaven borrowed from the neighbouring farm. With the addition of a little warm water he forms a dough, and the work of making his daily bread begins.

'At this moment a light hand knocked at the door of the humble cultivator. "Come in," he says, for the door is only on the latch. It was Eugène and Louison asking their way.

"—We have lost our way, they said; we tried a short cut, and lost our direction. Fortunately we saw a little light shining at your window, and we thought you might put us right."

'The man had his hands in the dough; he extricated them with the care of a poor fellow who is loth to lose a single grain of that black wheat-meal which has cost him so much labour and sweat; he even held his breath in order not to blow away any of the flour. (*Oh! what a pretty subject for a picture by Meissonier!*)—"My children, he said, this is an ill-chosen hour to travel across the country as you are doing; however you are more fortunate than wise, for you will be at Fontenay in a few moments."

'With these words, he replaced the loaf in the kneading-trough, and from the doorstep pointed out their way to the travellers.

'A hundred yards farther they see the wooden cross . . ."

Thus isolated, this page of M. Janin's novel loses nothing; by its judicious and moderate tone, it shows up better than we could the too exhilarating character of the situation.

I will not continue the analysis very far: the Château is found, they reach it by crossing the ditches over a frail plank. By her presence and her feminine fascination Louise stops the barking of the dogs, and Eugène goes to awaken his friend Hubert, who does not expect him. From the way in which the latter seizes Louise when she runs away and introduces her under his roof, we see at once what will happen. The novelist's characters in general are frail: they are not built or constituted of a very strong terrestrial clay, nor are they kindled with a very burning spark from heaven; they are born of a breath, animated by a whim, humid with a drop of dew; their name is youth, eighteen-year-old beauty, flighty facility, forgetfulness. Their passion fades and loses its colour in the sun. They change at the pleasure of a sun's ray and a zephyr.

Thus Louise will pass from love for Eugène to a fancy for Hubert, and will finally leave them both for one of the fine gentlemen of the terrace, who has tracked her to the Château. I was nearly forgetting one Denise, a country baker's wife, who crosses the story and says many things 'in the flowery patois of her soft eyes.'

In the second part of the novel the author attempts to put down Louise's light conduct to the account of the philosophy of the age, to that spirit of debauchery, sanctioned by Louis XV, prompted by Voltaire, propagated by so many others. But no: here I must stop him and say: Friend, take care, you are dogmatising; you are doing precisely what the people with doctrines and the philosophers of the various schools try to make us do. Your Louise, like your Denise, is flighty, and even a little false, not because she is of the eighteenth century and has seen in the Château of Fontenay I know not what little mysterious boudoir, not because she has been reading some forbidden story; she is flighty because of her nature, and because she would have been the same at all times and in every century.

We will leave Voltaire for the present and, as the only moral to be drawn from all this, we will merely say: Young girls, do not follow her example!

It cannot be said that M. Janin does not know his eighteenth century, but he loves it too well in some of its portions to know it in cold blood and to describe it with a calm head. The entire eighteenth century is not one whirlpool; we must distinguish many times and moments, and in each moment we must distinguish the different classes of society. I will choose an image which I think will correctly render the light in which the eighteenth century appears through M. Janin's last novel. In the pastoral romance of *Daphnis and Chloe*, the people of Methymne one day declared war upon the people of Mitylene, and a ship's captain captured the poor child Chloe and her flock. But as soon as the ship puts to sea and night falls, some strange wonders happen. From the side of the high sea the captain hears a loud noise as of a large fleet propelled by oars, and on the other side the land seems to be all aflame. In the morning, still more wonders are seen: the rams and goats on the deck of the ship appear to be leaping, bearing on their horns branches of

ivy with their clusters: Chloe herself appears to be crowned with pine-branches, and a shepherd's pipe that is heard on a neighbouring rock resounds like a war-trumpet. It is the god Pan, the friend of Chloe and the protector of flocks, who is causing this illusion in the men on the ship and communicating to all things this kind of transfiguration and general confusion. This same god Pan seems to have imparted something of this deceptive trepidation to the things and persons of the eighteenth century, as reflected in M. Janin's Pastoral.

I have heard a portrait of Louis XV in the tenth chapter of the second volume quoted with approval. Some of the touches in this passage, which displays the hideous old age of the King, are well laid on. But I think they are exaggerated, and that Louis XV never deserved, either for his good or his bad qualities, to be compared with Tiberius. 'He was an honest man, whose only fault was that he was a king,' wrote the great Frederick to Voltaire on the occasion of the death of Louis XV. In saying this Frederick was lenient and generous; he was besides reading a lesson to Voltaire, who showed himself pitiless to the dead king he had once flattered. In any case, it is a long cry from the *honest man*, as Frederick indulgently calls him, to Tiberius. As a quotable page, I prefer that which M. Janin devoted to the Regent, in which Henri IV is supposed to be apostrophising his grandson. The passage is truly just, it is simple and beautiful, and, as I am in the way of making cuttings, I will give it:

'Unhappy prince (Henry IV is supposed to be saying), most like me of all the grandsons of my race, you had in you all the qualities that go to the making of a great man, and you have used them to perpetrate the greatest vices. You have followed only my bad examples, you have walked only in the path of my errors. This kingdom that I saved, this monarchy that I founded, and which the great king raised to the highest degree of respect and obedience that a mortal crown could hope for, what have you done with it, Monsieur le Régent? You have made it a declamation, an irony, a plaything! The royal child, who came into the world on a tomb, this precious scion of so many kings entrusted by France to your care, you surrounded with all the attentions that prolong the life of a child, but also with all the examples that ruin a young man. So the body of this chosen prince was safe and sound, whilst his soul was degraded. Unwise man, you did not understand the mischief concealed in a bad word, and all the revolutions that a guilty conduct is able to engender! You played not only with the money of my people, but with their beliefs, and, powerless to break that moral strength, you attacked it with witticisms and contempt. Go! go! as you have sown baneful seeds, our grandchildren will reap an abominable harvest. And yet I will

not curse you, my poor boy : your mind was good, your heart without gall : you were affable as I was, more amorous than I : you never loved vengeance, and forgiveness was always to be found in your smile and your eyes.

I could wish that M. Janin had always restrained and mastered his style, as he does here, that he had sometimes arrested the torrent of classical allusions which gush and bubble over. When he has these volumes reprinted, there will be a few errors of fact to correct. Thus, Chevert was not a Marshal of France (vol. i, p. 231), it was Fabert he was thinking of. Ausonius was not a bishop (vol. i, p. 420), hardly a Christian ; it was Sidonius who was bishop. In the ardour of composition, the author's pen makes blunders which are no more than a confusion between two reminiscences that tread on each other's heels.

M. Janin has the honourable ambition to make a book. A clever, everyday writer, he aspires to surpass himself in some chosen subject. Shall I say it ? I am less anxious about it than he. This book that gives him so much thought he is unconsciously making each day, or rather the book is making itself, willy-nilly. Its chapters are diverse, varied, motley, like the literary life of this time. Do you know what I understand by this series of chapters of Janin's work ? I begin by saying to the author : Do not come in, do not meddle ; go on producing, and never turn back. But I will imagine a friend, a man in love with letters and beautiful style, a connoisseur without any false scruples, who knows his Horace and his Apuleius, with this mass of feuilletons before him, which Janin has been giving us these twenty years, as a tree shoots forth its leaves. This amateur, who has a quick eye, who both remembers and divines, who reads, peruses, chooses from among these numerous pages those which should be pruned, those which should survive and which only need to be detached in order to appear in their best light. This does not always imply an entire feuilleton, very often it means only a half or a third. Here the true chapter begins, here it ends : the editor will show his ability by marking the right place. What a number of those piquant chapters occur to my mind, of those little masterpieces on the authors of the day, on the novelists in vogue, on all that has passed, sung, chattered, fluttered on the stage ! How many good things Janin has said about Molière ! when he

speaks of Molière, he comes to the full and current truth, 'the good, frank, amiable, true truth.' On the novelist Balzac, what shrewd, subtile, sensible things he has thought of! remember what you were reading the other day apropos of the comedy *Mercadet*. And not to go back so far, only last Monday, did you hear him speak of that lively, fantastic and indefinable creature, Mademoiselle Déjazet in person? Janin defined her in the freshest, liveliest, briskest style, the style that was most like the thing. Take that feuilleton of the 6 October at the bottom of the fifth column, cut it at the bottom of the ninth, and there you have your chapter ready-made, to be headed: *Mademoiselle Déjazet in 1851*, at the moment when Fortune says to that light-hearted thing, as she has said at some time or other to all victors, to all queens, to all shepherdesses: *It is enough!* But I hear a wise man objecting: Where is the necessity of painting Mademoiselle Déjazet? The man who makes that reflection and thinks himself wise, is not so. There is occasion to paint, at some time, all that has lived, shone, flourished in its day: only find the colour of the subject and the ray. M. Janin finds this ray on a thousand occasions.

THE CARDINAL DE RETZ¹

Monday, 20 October 1851.

THE Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz first appeared in 1717, under the Regency of Philip of Orleans. When it was known that a copy of these Memoirs had been furtively printed and was about to appear, the Regent asked the Lieutenant of Police d'Argenson what would be the probable effect of the book.—'None that you need be afraid of, Monseigneur, replied d'Argenson, who knew the work. The way in which the Cardinal de Retz speaks of himself, the candour with which he discloses his character, confesses his faults, and informs us of the ill-success of his unwise proceedings, will not encourage anybody to imitate him. On the contrary, his misfortunes are a lesson to the thoughtless and the mischief-makers. We cannot think why this man left his general confession in writing. . . .' The effect was, however, quite different from that presaged by d'Argenson. It was as if somebody had said, on the day before the appearance of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, that they would destroy the authority of the philosopher. Some faults and errors are so well confessed that they immediately become contagious for the human imagination. 'This book, said the honest Brossette (the most peaceable of men), speaking of Retz' Memoirs, makes me a leaguer, a *frondeur*, and almost a promoter of sedition, by contagion.' The Regent became wiser shortly after the publication, and the Conspiracy of Cellamare, in 1718, was a sort of counterfeit of the Memoirs of Retz, and a commentary upon it. At every period of civil disturbance, they have been appropriate to the occasion and have revived the public interest. Benjamin Constant used to say during the Directoire period that there were only two books that he could read, Machiavelli and Retz. This appears to us then a favourable moment for reading again these Memoirs

¹ Memoirs of the Cardinal de Retz.

and extracting a few lessons from them, if lessons of this kind can ever be of any service. If I come to speak of them to-day, however, it is not to seek in them any political application, or to open out any prospect in accordance with the views of the moment ; I prefer to consider them in a more general, a more impartial way, and more for themselves.

Retz belongs to that great and strong generation which came before Louis XIV, which included more or less, within a few years, La Rochefoucauld, Molière, even Pascal, a generation that Richelieu's rule had found too young to reduce, which raised its head again on the morrow of the Minister's death, and distinguished itself in thought and language (when not in action) by a free and bold inspiration, in which the distinguished men who rose up during the long reign of Louis XIV were too often deficient. That is so true both in respect of thought and language, that when Retz' Memoirs appeared, one of the reasons alleged or suggested against their authenticity by a few timid minds was just the language of these admirable Memoirs, that living, familiar, superior and careless touch, which attests a master-hand and which offended where it did not charm. The language under Louis XIV acquired many qualities, and was imprinted at the beginning of the eighteenth century with a stamp of correctness and conciseness, but it lost in the process a certain breadth and its air of grandeur.

It was this air of grandeur that Retz prized most, that he aspired to at first in all things, in his words, in his actions, and carried into all his plans ; but, if he sought fame, he had in him many qualities of the first order on which to found it. Born in October 1614, of an illustrious family, intended against his own inclinations for the Church with ' perhaps the least ecclesiastical soul in the world,' he tried to escape from his profession by duels and gallant adventures ; but the obstinacy of his family and his star prevented these early pranks from producing the desired effect and casting him back into the life of a layman. He made the best of the situation, and began to study vigorously, determined like Cæsar to be second in nothing, not even at the Sorbonne. He succeeded, he held his ground in the final struggles and in the *Acts* of the school against an Abbé who was

under the Cardinal de Richelieu's protection ; he gained a signal victory, careless about offending the powerful Cardinal ' who desired to be the master everywhere and in all things.' About the same time, a copy of the *Conjuratation de Fiesque*, the Abbé de Retz' first profane work, having fallen into Richelieu's hands, the latter saw how much the young man caressed the ideal of the conspirator and the magnificent rebel, and said : ' Here is a dangerous spirit.' On another occasion he said to his chamberlain, still speaking of de Retz, ' that he had quite a gallows face.'

Retz was small, ugly, dark, with a poor figure and short-sighted ; but these qualities did not stand in the way of his successes as a gallant. Sober in respect of eating, he was extremely dissolute, but above all ambitious, driving abreast his passions and aspirations, and even designs which did not exclude a certain degree of consideration for the public weal. Possessed with an ardour for notoriety, and for attaining to something great and extraordinary, and at the same time entering public life under the rule of a despotic Minister, there was nothing left for him but the idea of conspiracy, and his first predilections turned in that direction, as they might, at other times, have inclined in a different direction. In spite of his unruliness and impetuosity, Retz was very capable of constraining himself, in obedience to his interest and ambition. In Italy, at Rome, whither he made a journey in 1638, at the age of twenty-four, he resolved to give no cause for offence and at all hazards to acquire a good reputation at an ecclesiastical Court. We have his own word for it, which is explicitly confirmed by Tallemant, who was his companion on this visit : ' He deserves commendation for one thing, says Tallemant, that is that neither at Rome nor at Venice did he see a woman, or if he did, it was done so secretly that we could discover nothing.' At the same time he endeavoured to set off this transitory decency by a great outlay, handsome liveries, a very cavalier-like equipage ; and one day, to sustain the point of honour and rather than yield his ground in a game of tennis, he was on the point of drawing his sword with his small number of gentlemen against the whole escort of the Imperial ambassador.

He was deeply involved in the conspiracies against Richelieu, and he staked his head during the last years of

that Minister. He relates in full detail the plan of one of these conspiracies, in which it was arranged, on the first news of a victory to be won by the Comte de Soissons, to raise a sedition in Paris and to carry out the *coup de main* with the principal prisoners in the Bastille, the Maréchal de Vitry, Cramail and others. The Governor of the Bastille at once became the prisoner of his own garrison, who had been won over. The Arsenal, which was a few yards distant, was captured. In short, it was the *Mallet Conspiracy* which Retz organised against Richelieu. It miscarried, but it might have been a success. How many great things in history hang by a thread!

Richelieu being dead and Louis XIII following him soon after, there came the Regency, and the most easy-going at first that could be imagined. Retz at once obtained the appointment of Coadjutor to his uncle the Archbishop of Paris, and from that time, to use his own language, he ceases 'to be in the pit, or at most in the orchestra playing and trifling with the fiddles'; he mounts upon the *stage*. It may be observed that in his Memoirs, in which he speaks of himself with so little disguise, he perpetually uses these expressions and similes taken from the *stage*, from *comedy*; he considers the whole as mere play, and there are times when, speaking of the principal persons he has to deal with, he arranges his cast and disposes of the parts just as the head of a company of players might do with his chief actors. In one of the first scenes of the Fronde, in Parliament (11 January 1649), relating the manner in which he deprives the Duc d'Elbeuf of the command of the troops and confers it on the Prince de Conti, he describes how M. de Longueville, then M. de Bouillon, then the Maréchal de La Mothe, enter the room one after the other, and every time begin again to declare their adhesion to the choice of the Prince de Conti, and put themselves under his orders: 'We had agreed, together, he says, to make these persons appear on the stage one after the other, because we considered that *nothing affects and excites the people, and even the Parliaments, which always take very much after the people, so much as variety of spectacles.*' In all these passages, Retz openly poses as an author or a clever *impresario* who is staging his play. He already belonged to that race of men who, in the matter of disturbances and revolutions, love the

acting still more than the *dénouement*, great artists in intrigues and influences and delighting in them, whilst the more real and practical men of ambition aim at the goal and aspire to results. There are indeed passages in his Memoirs, delightful scenes, which are conducted so well that he appears to be competing with Molière rather than making war upon Mazarin.

We must not, however, exaggerate this point of view to the extent of omitting what was seriously important and political, at least at the beginning, in Retz' plans and ambitions. And we must never forget this : Retz, after all, did not triumph, he failed in the object of his pursuit, which was to drive Mazarin from office and usurp his place in the favour of Queen Anne of Austria. We see in him the complete agitator, the *frondeur*, the factionary in all his glory : but we never see him a minister. We know not what he might have done in this quite new part. It would not be the first time that a superior nature became transformed in rising to power and exercising it ; and a man is only entirely superior on condition of having it in him to be transformed and renewed, and of being equal to any great situation. In the case of Retz as in the case of Mirabeau, we see only the ardent struggle, the vast intrigue and the broken thread. In either case the man of the second period had no scope for development. And Retz, in this comparison, has the disadvantage of having survived, of having assisted at the entire miscarriage of his hopes, of having been partially demoralised, lowered and degraded, as may happen to the strongest natures when they see their object escaping from them. Seeing the battle lost, in his exile and wanderings he yielded to base distractions. Not but that in his last years Retz rises again, recovers a certain dignity in a nobly sustained retreat, arouses even the idea of honesty by completely paying off his immense debts, and redeems himself in our eyes in the intellectual order by the composition of his incomparable Memoirs. We feel almost obliged to pardon his intrigues and machinations, since he wrote them down. But, in his Memoirs, Retz, ousted from action and practical politics, becomes more and more merely a writer, a painter, a great artist ; it is henceforth impossible for him to be anything else, and it is easy to use as a weapon against the man himself,

against what he might once have been and become, this last quality on which his fame for ever rests.

I was desirous of insinuating this reserve because I always wonder at the eagerness with which narrow and negative natures say to every superior genius: 'You have so far done no more than this in your life; fortune has prevented your trying your skill in a wider and more open career, therefore you could not have done any more.' These people need from time to time to be given the lie, like that which Dumouriez, for example, gives them at the defiles of the Argonne.

With regard to Retz, there are unfortunately many reasons for supposing that in him the adventurous, the audacious, the *foolhardy*, as Richelieu said, formed the most essential part and the very basis of his nature, and that these qualities would at all times have compromised the part of the statesman, the idea of which he only mentally conceived. He was one of those men in whom humour controls character; love of his pleasures, dissoluteness, intrigue for intrigue's sake, a love of disguise and *masquerade*, a little too much of the Figaro, if I may say so, impaired the seriousness and destroyed in practice the success of plans which his fine and impetuous genius was after all so capable of conceiving. Many a time, as he himself acknowledges, he lacked good sense in his determinations, and there are times when he reproaches himself with not having had *a grain* of it; he was subject to fits of blindness, attacks of imagination which those men are able to guard against whose thought should guide and rule empires. His contemporaries tell us so, and he himself does not conceal the fact. When a La Rochefoucauld paints Retz and Retz agrees in recognising himself in the principal features of the painting, we can do no more than hold our tongues, poor distant observers that we are, and bow assent.

The second book of Retz' Memoirs exhibits him to the best advantage, in the elevation of his political thought and in all the charms of his painting. There can be no finer and more truthful picture (I say truthful, for it is as manifest as life itself) than that of the beginning of the Regency and of the almost insensible and creeping foundation, which he witnessed, of Cardinal Mazarin's power. That smoothness and evenness of the first four

years of the Regency, followed all at once and without any apparent cause by a sudden discontent and a breath of tempest, are described and translated in these pages in a way to defy and baffle all future historians. I cannot understand how M. Bazin, on reading these pages, should have failed immediately to acknowledge and salute Retz as a master, even though in many cases he could have refuted him, if occasion offered ; but an historian who, at his very first steps, meets, in the subject he is treating of, with a forerunner of such power of observation and painting, and only makes it an opportunity for trying to diminish and obscure everything after him, appears to me to show a cavilling and quibbling spirit that immediately excludes him from the broad way of the historian's career. Observe that Retz explains when he paints, and that the political and profound reason of things glides into the stroke of his brush. After those four first years of the Regency, during which the impetus imparted by the Cardinal de Richelieu continued to impel the ship of the State without any need of another push, after these four years of perfect tranquillity, of smiles and indulgence, one enters, without at first being aware of it, into new waters, and by degrees a new breath is felt : it is the breath of reforms, of revolutions. Whence does it come ? On what occasion ? What were the slender causes that brought about such violent shocks ? That is what Retz excels in explaining, and these pages of his *Memoirs*, which might be entitled, *How Revolutions Commence*, resemble, in their elevation and power, both Bossuet and Montesquieu.

'For more than twelve hundred years France has had kings, says Retz ; but these kings have not always been as absolute as they are now.' And in a rapid and brilliant résumé, he seeks to show that if the French Monarchy was never regulated and restricted by written laws, by charters, like the royalties of England and Arragon, there had yet existed in olden times a *wise medium* 'which our fathers had found between the license of kings and the unrestraint of the people.' This wise and just mean which, in France, has always been in the state of a desire, a regret or a hope, rather than in the state of real practice, had, however, some shadow of an effect and custom in the power attributed to Parliament, and Retz

shows how all the wise kings, Saint Louis, Charles V, Louis XII, Henri IV, were eager to moderate themselves and surround themselves with a limit of justice. On the other hand, everything that we should call in our present-day language a tendency to centralisation, all the efforts of Louis XI, of Richelieu, which were to be consummated under Louis XIV, everything that was to make the monarchy sole mistress, seems to him a way to despotism; and it cannot be denied that it was indeed pure despotism, before this unity in administration was connected and combined, after 1789 and after 1814, with the constitutional rule and the rule of liberty. When the work was only half-way and carried out on one side only, as in the time of Retz, on the morrow of Richelieu's death, this uncontrolled invasion of the royal and ministerial power was indeed a despotism, if ever there was one, and it is not astonishing if, in the interval of respite which occurred between Richelieu and Louis XIV, the thought occurred to oppose it and to erect a dam by means of a sort of Constitution. That was the first serious thought out of which arose the Fronde, a thought which only appeared in Parliament on the occasion of particular grievances, and which, when the disturbances broke out, was very quickly swept away in the whirlwind of intrigues and personal ambitions, but which Retz clearly expresses at the beginning, which Parliament no less formally consecrated in its Declaration of the 24 October 1648 (a true Charter in the germ), and which it would be want of thought to disregard.

A man of great intellect and, what is better, of a very good and well-balanced mind, M. de Sainte-Aulaire, has made this view the principal idea of his *Histoire de la Fronde*; he has endeavoured to extract from it, so to say, the constitutional element which was too soon masked and distorted at the pleasure of the factions. Sometimes it would seem as if M. Bazin had conceived his work on the same period of our history only to oppose at every foot M. de Sainte-Aulaire's point of view. Hence the opinions of the two historians on Retz are as opposite as they can be. Whilst M. Bazin leads us to regard him merely as the wittiest, the most personal and the most blustering of writers, M. de Sainte-Aulaire tries to find in Retz, for its own sake, in spite of all the particular infractions, a line

which is not only one of frivolous and factious ambition : ' Although in writing his book, says M. de Sainte-Aulaire, he did not escape the influences I have just indicated (the prevailing influences and the changes introduced in opinion since the establishment of Louis XIV), we see in it a proof however that he saw and understood all ; that he measured the dangers to which despotism was about to expose the Monarchy, and that he sought to prevent them. My admiration for this great master has grown when recopying the pictures drawn by his hand. . . . ' If this favourable judgment is justified, it is so especially at the beginning of the Memoirs, and in the part we are dealing with.

Richelieu's rule had been so firm and absolute, the consequent prostration in the whole political Body had been so great, that it needed not less than four or five years for the *reaction* to make itself felt, for the public organs that he had suppressed to recover their activity ; and yet they only did so, as usually happens, on the occasion of quite particular measures which angered them personally. Mazarin, a stranger to France, a clever negotiator in foreign affairs, but with no idea of our public right and our maxims, followed, though at a slower pace, the path traced by Richelieu, but he followed it without any suspicion that it was ' on all sides bordered by precipices.' He believed above all in French levity, and had no suspicion that there was anything logical or consistent behind it. He did not observe that the tranquillity of the first years of the Regency was not a sign of real health ; instead of taking measures and preparing his remedies for the immediate future, he continued a line of conduct which aggravated the disorder and the suffering in the interior : ' The pain was sharper, says Retz ; the head awoke ; Paris came back to consciousness, and uttered a sigh ; no notice was taken of it : it fell into a frenzy. Let us come to details.' Do you not admire this opening in the style of Bossuet, or, if you prefer it, in the style of Montesquieu ?

And then there are certain moments, as we know, when maladies of the same nature break out at the same moment in different countries : that is true of physical maladies as well as of moral epidemics. The news of the Revolution in Naples, of the Revolution in England, carried as it were a

breath of sedition to the minds of men. The vague humours of public discontent are very ready, in these times of crises, to be seized with emulation, to be determined by the example of neighbours and to assume the form of the prevailing and circulating evil.

Retz has a marvellous understanding of all this and communicates it to his readers. Do not suppose that it is only seditions and revolts that he understands, he understands and divines revolutions. With the power of an observer who is gifted with an exquisite sensibility of touch he describes their period of invasion, so abrupt at times, so unexpected, and yet so long in preparation. I know of no finer page in history than that on which he paints this sudden transition from mental dejection and supineness of the nation, which makes them think that the present evil will never cease, to the very opposite extreme in which, far from regarding revolutions as impossible, they appear quite simple and easy :

'And this disposition alone, he adds, is sometimes able to bring them about. . . . Who would have thought, three months before *the little point of troubles*, that a revolution could have arisen in a State where, the royal house was perfectly united, where the Court was enslaved to the Minister, where the provinces and the capital were under his sway, where the armies were victorious, where the High Courts appeared powerless in every direction, whoever had said so would have been regarded as out of his senses, I will not say in the mind of the vulgar, but among the d'Estrées and the Sénéterres.'

That is to say among the most astute and those who had the best knowledge of the Court.¹ In the succeeding pages we witness all the stages of this so unexpected awakening soon changing into terror, consternation and madness. We might imagine Retz to be a curious physician describing the malady *con amore*, that malady which he always desired most to see close by ; evidently he would rather see it than cure it :

'There appears a little consciousness, he says, speaking of the dejected Body of the State, a glimmer or rather a spark of life ; and this sign of life, almost imperceptible at the beginning, is not given by Monsieur, it is not given by Monsieur le Prince, it is not given by the Grantees of the Kingdom, it is not given by the Provinces ; it

¹ Madame de Motteville tells us, in her Memoirs, that M. de Sénéterre said to her on the last day of the year 1647, 'that he feared that in future the State would be troubled by many disasters.' But, at this date, the quarrel with Parliament was already begun : M. de Sénéterre would not have said so on the first day of the year 1647.

is given by Parliament, which, until our century, never began a revolution, and which would certainly have condemned by cruel Decrees that which itself started, if it had been begun by any other body. It grumbled at the Edict of the Tarif (1647), and, no sooner had it merely murmured, when all the world awoke. *On awakening they looked around and groped, as it were, for the laws; they did not find them, they were scared, they cried out; they demanded them of each other; and, in this state of agitation, the questions which their explanations raised, from being obscure and venerable by their obscurity, became problematical; and then, in respect of half the world, odious. The people entered the sanctuary: they lifted the veil which should always cover whatever may be said, whatever may be believed of the right of the people and that of kings, who never agree so well together as in silence. The hall of the Palace profaned these mysteries. Let us come to the particular facts which will give you ocular evidence of this detail.'*

Those are exordiums which count in history.

The man who under Louis XIV, about 1672, at the age of fifty-eight, wrote these things in solitude, in intimacy, addressing them as a sort of pastime to one of his lady friends, had surely in his mind and imagination a serious idea of the essence of societies and the grandeur of political conception; he too often corrupted and tarnished it in practice; but with his pen in his hand, as is the case with writers of genius, he grasped it with brilliancy, clearness and plenitude.

In every historical personage we must attack first the great sides; I know not whether I shall have the time to note all Retz' weaknesses, all his infirmities, nay all his disgraceful acts, and to stigmatise them; but I should reproach myself if I had not at once indicated the manifest signs of superiority and strength, which, in spite of ourselves, force our admiration when we approach him. We have not yet done with him.

Retz, who now appears to us, knowing his life and his confessions, in the light of one of the most scandalous of churchmen, did not appear in that light during his lifetime to the men of his Order and to his flock. With an unexampled candour he has explained to us the measures he took to win consideration among the Clergy and favour with his flocks, not only as a party man, but as an Archbishop, and that without suppressing any of his secret vices and weaknesses. Astonishing as the thing may appear, we must acknowledge that he retained this esteem as long as he lived, and in spite of all he did to impair it. A learned doctor, or cunning enough to appear so, a careful administrator, ever ready to defend the rights and

prerogatives of his Order, an excellent and eloquent preacher, lavish of alms for all purposes, he had a double reputation, and his adventures of all kinds in politics and intrigue were never able, thanks to the imperfect publicity of the times, to shake his good renown in the Île Notre-Dame or in the Saint-Jacques quarter. The Jansenist party, which was then flourishing, was very favourably disposed towards him : ' I esteemed the devout highly, he says, and in their eyes outward show is one of the greatest points of piety.' He did not practise hypocrisy properly speaking, for that is a degrading vice ; but he profited by the disorder of the times, by the dispensations of an extraordinary situation, whilst relying on the prejudices which confined people's minds. It may be believed even, as he very well explained, that in peaceful times, his reputation as Archbishop might have suffered much more, for he would have found it difficult to disguise his vices and his disorderly conduct for any length of time ; as it is they were overlooked in the inevitable confusion of a civil war.

What might make us conjecture that Retz was, in fact, hardly qualified to become anything else than what he was, is the enthusiasm with which he was carried away, at the very beginning of the disturbances, to play his part as a popular leader. He was convinced ' that it needs greater qualities to make a good party chief than to make a good emperor of the universe.' This title of *party chief* had always appeared to him the most honourable title in Plutarch's *Lives*, and when he saw that affairs were becoming sufficiently embroiled to enable him to assume the part naturally, he felt a tickling of the senses and a movement of vainglory which seems to indicate that he could conceive nothing finer and more delightful beyond. He was about to swim in his element.

When Saint-Simon, for his part, describes the delight and gratification that he feels in his power of observing the faces and expressions of the Court in the great circumstances which lay bare secret passions and intentions, he does not express himself with a keener sense of delectation than Retz describing his satisfaction at the idea of seizing the desired rôle : we may conclude that the one was in his element as an observer, and the other as an agitator, both of them artists in their sphere, and comforted after all by

their imagination, when it is given to them to tell of their past pleasure and to describe it.

In Retz' second book there is an admirable conversation between him and the Prince de Condé, who, on his return as a victor from Lens, is truly master of the situation. This first and double rôle of restorer of the public weal and of guardian of the royal authority at first tempted Condé's clear and elevated mind; but Retz makes it wonderfully plain to us that the Prince was unable to sustain it; he was too impatient for that: 'Heroes have their faults; Monsieur le Prince's fault was that he had not sufficient perseverance, though he had one of the finest minds in the world.' And Retz continues to explain the reason of this want of perseverance. On the return of the army, seeing the Parliament in conflict with the Court, the glory of being the *restorer of the public weal* was the first idea that occurred to the Prince, that of being the *guardian of the royal authority* was the second. But, though he saw both things equally he did not feel them equally. Hesitating between the two ideas and even seeing them together, he did not weigh them together. He passed from one to the other: thus what appeared to him one day the easier, appeared to him next day the more difficult. The elevated manner in which Retz here appraises the Prince de Condé and his first intentions, before they had deviated and become embittered in this struggle, deserves that we should apply it to himself. He speaks sufficiently ill of himself on every occasion for us to believe in his sincerity when he shows himself under a different light.

Wishing then to convince the Prince of Condé that he has a great and incomparable part to play in this crisis between the Magistracy and the Court, wishing to moderate his impatience and his anger with the Parliament, and prove to him that with a little address a man, when he is a prince of the blood and a victor to boot, may come by degrees to manage and govern that great Body, Retz, in a conversation he has with him in the Hôtel de Condé (December 1648), rises to the highest views on politics, views which anticipate the future, without at the same time neglecting what was practical at the time. Angered at the opposition he encountered at every step in the deliberations and resolutions of that assembly, the Prince

de Condé returned to his very unparliamentary instincts and threatened to get the better of these *square bonnets* as well as of the populace, by force of arms. To which Retz replied, with an instinctive prophecy of 1789 :

'Is not Parliament the idol of the people? I know that you account them for nothing, because the Court is armed; but I entreat you to permit me to tell you that *one should count them for much whenever they count themselves for all. That is what they are doing.* They are beginning themselves to count your armies for nothing; and *the mischief is that their forces consist in their imagination: and we may say with truth that, differing from all the other kinds of powers, when they have reached a certain point, they are able to do all that they think they can do.*'

The Cardinal de Retz, as we see, knew as much about the strength of the Tiers-État as the Abbé Sieyès. Going back to the past ages and to the spirit of what subsisted in those times, he defined in singularly happy terms the antique and undefined Constitution of France, what he calls *the mystery of the State*: 'Every Monarchy has its veil which covers the mystery of the State; that of France consists in the kind of religious and sacred silence in which the people enshroud, whilst almost always blindly obeying their king, the right which they pretend to think they have of dispensing with that obedience only on those occasions when complaisance to their king would not even be to his advantage.' He shows how quite recently Parliament had, with singular maladroitness, been laid by the Court under the necessity of defining those cases when disobedience was expedient and those when it was not: 'It was a miracle that Parliament did not recently lift this veil, and lift it formally and by Decree; which would indeed have a more dangerous and fatal result than the liberty which the people have for some time taken to look through it.' At the conclusion of this memorable speech Retz aims at reconciling Condé with the Parliament, without absolutely alienating him from the Court; he proposes that he should assume a useful, harmless, necessary part, which would make him the protector of the public and of the High Courts, and would infallibly eliminate Mazarin: that always meant reckoning without the heart of the Queen. Be that as it may, it is a fine dialogue and conducted with openness by the two interlocutors who are soon to become adversaries. The character and the language are observed on both sides. Condé and Retz part, each holding to his opinion, but with mutual esteem;

the one on the side of the Court and resolved, after weighing all the circumstances, to defend it ; the other remaining a Coadjutor and, before everything, the defender of Paris.

Many quarrels, many perfidies, many insults and outrages which supervened since, diminished the nobility of this first explanation and sullied the memory of it ; however, on reading it we take a pleasure in thinking that those great minds, those impetuous and misguided hearts, were not originally as evil-disposed nor as wrapped up in their own personal and perverse interests as they appeared since, when the passions and cupidities of each were unchained. It is one of the greatest misfortunes of civil wars that they soon corrupt the best and most generous of those who become involved in them. That was true of the Prince de Condé, it was true even of Retz.

He himself took care to indicate the precise moment, very soon after this conversation, when he determined to yield entirely to his passion and his hatred for Mazarin (January 1649) : ' When I saw, he says, that the Court only desired even their own good in their own way, which was never the right way, I ceased to think of harming them, and this was the moment when I fully and completely resolved to attack the Mazarin personally. . . . ' From this day all means are alike to him for attaining his end, arms, pamphlets, calumnies. Now the dance is opened, and he only thinks of remaining *master of the ball*, as Mazarin himself said very expressively.

This too is the moment when, like the artist that he is with his pen in his hand, thinking he has done with the preamble and left the vestibule of his subject, he lets himself go, and, whilst hitherto he has drawn only profile portraits, he now shows them full face and full figure as in a gallery : he draws not less than seventeen portraits in succession, all admirable in their life, brilliance, subtlety and resemblance, for he is impartial even when he is painting his enemy. Among these seventeen portraits, not one of which but is a masterpiece, we may distinguish especially those of the Queen, of Gaston Duke of Orleans, of the Prince de Condé, of M. de Turenne, of M. de La Rochefoucauld, of Madame de Longueville and her brother the Prince de Conti, of Madame de Chevreuse and Madame de Montbazon, and lastly of Mathieu Molé. This gallery,

whose features a hundred times repeated and reproduced fill our history-books, is the glory of the French brush, and we may say that before Saint-Simon nothing more instinct with life, more brilliant and more wonderfully animated had ever been written. Even after Saint-Simon this gallery of Retz has not paled in the least, and we only admire the difference in the manner, a something more laconic, more distinct, more delicate in colouring, but which penetrates no less deeply to the very soul: M. le Prince 'whose mind nature had made as great as his heart,' but who was not permitted by fortune to show both *in all their extent*, and who was *unable to fulfil his merit*; M. de Turenne who lacked 'only those qualities which he could not imagine,' and who should never be denied any quality, 'for who knows? he has always had in all things, as in his speech, *certain obscurities* which only came out on occasions, but which never came out except to his glory'; Madame de Longueville who 'had a languor in her manners which was more effective than even the brilliance of more beautiful women. There was a languor even in her mind which had its charms, because she had *luminous and surprising awakenings*.' I should like to quote, to recall the whole of these pictures which are drawn with so powerful and charming a touch.

These portraits, coming after the fine political conversation with the Prince de Condé, after the wonderful comedy scenes of the first days of the Barricades, and after the great and noble considerations which precede, form a unique introduction and exposition which will survive even when the remainder of the work ceases to hold the attention.

Retz' style and language is of the best; it is full of fire, and is animated by the spirit of things. Now that we have a better edition of these Memoirs, it is easy to see that the obscurities which disfigured them were for the most part merely the result of corruptions of the copy. In many passages however there is still room for improvement, before a good text is established; we now have all the elements of it. The language is of the period which shortly preceded Louis XIV, which unites to grandeur a supreme air of negligence, which gives it its charm. The expression is ordinarily humorous, picturesque in its rapidity, always in the French spirit, full of imagination,

however, and sometimes of magnificence. Speaking of a magistrate who had been imprisoned and who, on the insurgents demanding his liberation by the Court, is restored to freedom: 'The people would not quit their arms, says Retz, until it had been carried into effect; even the Parliament did not issue their orders to lay them down before they saw Broussel in his place. He returned on the next day, or rather *he was carried on the heads of the people with incredible acclamations.*' I will not discuss the question whether the expression is in proportion to Broussel's importance; but how faithfully it renders the impression and the exaltation of the moment! Retz, you may well imagine, is not deceived by it, and when he describes Paris, immediately after its Broussel has been restored, as having again become '*more tranquil than I have ever seen Good Friday,*' we perceive the unexpressed irony of the other side of the picture.—'The Court which *felt itself touched to the apple of its eye . . .*' he says apropos of the dismissal of the Intendants, which was discussed by the united High Courts; he is full of these concrete, animated expressions. At other times he pleasingly extends his images; thus, contrasting his own well-rooted influence with the one day's favour of the Duc d'Elbeuf: 'Influence with the people, long nursed and cultivated, he says, never fails, if it is allowed a little time to grow, to choke *those slender and budding flowers of public goodwill, that sometimes spring up by mere chance.*' Indicating the means he had early employed for founding this influence, he tells of his great alms, of his liberalities, '*very often silent liberalities, which sometimes echoed all the louder.*' This language of Retz is new and original and at the same time appropriate. He excels in imparting to words all their value of meaning, all their quality, and sometimes makes it more palpable by developing it. After saying that the First President Molé was *all of a piece*, which is a good though an ordinary expression, he goes on: 'The President de Mesmes, who was at least as well-disposed to the Court as he, but who had more foresight and more judgment (*jointure*), replied in his ear. . . .' That is the legitimate way to create a new expression, as well as to extract a new meaning out of a common one. Retz' pen moreover does all this heedlessly and unconsciously. He had the gift of speech, and what played and was painted on

his mind had but to make a leap upon the paper. We should add that there are many inequalities in his language. The last volumes drag. In the first volumes the author's narrative is sown, and even with a certain affectation (it is his only affectation), with political reflections which Chesterfield said were the only just, the only practical ones he had ever seen printed. They should teach experience, if ever experience was learned from books. They recall it at least and summarise it in a striking manner for those who have seen and lived.

This is only a first *crayon* of the book and the man ; it would be painful to me to say that I shall not return to them.

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RIVAROL

Monday, 27 October 1851.

AFTER Chamfort and Rulhière, it is Rivarol's turn ; one is accustomed to associate them. He was younger than they. Born at Bagnols in the Gard, in April 1757 according to some of his biographers, he would have been only forty-four years of age when he died at Berlin in April 1801 ; those who affirm that he was born sooner grant him only forty-eight years at the most at the date of his death. This premature end should dispose us to be a little indulgent to a man of a strong and brilliant mind, who was much taken up with society, who was thrown into exile by the Revolution, and who was unable to carry out some great plans of works, of which, however, he left more than promises.

It appears that Rivarol was really of noble birth, notwithstanding all the jests and ridicule that he had to suffer on that score. When, as a young man, he began his literary career, he wounded the vanity of the crowd of little authors ; they took their revenge by attacking his birth. His grandfather, of Italian origin and born in Lombardy, after going through the War of the Succession in the service of Spain, settled in Languedoc and there married a cousin-german of M. Déparcieux, of the Academy of Sciences. Rivarol's father, a man of education, as we are told, who is even said to have had a taste for writing, was without any fortune ; he had sixteen children, of whom Rivarol was the eldest. Domestic straits obliged him to keep a sort of hotel or ordinary, a circumstance which was since often laid at Rivarol's door :

*C'est dans Bagnols que j'ai vu la lumière,
Au cabaret ou feu mon pauvre père
A juste prix faisait noce et festin,*

Marie-Joseph Chénier made him say in a rather dull satire. On his entry into the social world Rivarol first

appeared under the name of the Chevalier de Parcieux, on the strength of his relationship through his grandmother with the savant (Déparcieux), so justly honoured for his great schemes of public usefulness. His right to bear that name was disputed, and he resumed that of Rivarol: he did well; it is a sonorous, brilliant name, which raises an echo and harmonises well with the quality of his mind.

He was educated in the South, no doubt, perhaps at Cavaillon; it must have been in a Seminary, for he had dealings with a bishop and for a time wore priest's bands.¹ Be this as it may, we find him in full flower at Paris about 1784. A pleasing face, an elegant figure, a confident carriage of the head, sustained by a rare facility of elocution, by a delicate originality and a piquant urbanity, gained him the favour of the drawing-rooms and that first attention of the world which talent sometimes has long years to wait for without obtaining it. Rivarol seemed to be leading a frivolous life, and he was at bottom serious and studious. He gave himself to society during the daytime, and worked at night. His facility of speech and improvisation did not prevent his brooding in solitude. He studied languages, he meditated on the principles and instruments of our knowledge, he aimed at the glory of style. When he marked out his place among the writers of the day, he raised his eyes to the first ranks. He had ambition under an air of indolence. This literary ambition showed itself in his first two attempts, his translation of Dante's *Inferno* (1783), and his *Discours sur l'Universalité de la Langue française*, which was crowned by the Academy of Berlin (1784).

To translate Dante was for Rivarol 'a good way, as he said rather pretentiously, of paying his court to the Rivarols of Italy,' and a manner of paying his debt to the country of his fathers; indirectly it meant proving his nobility beyond the mountains. Above all it was an occasion for exercising his powers on a beautiful theme and struggling with a master. To call him at once by his right name, Rivarol is a *stylist*; he aims at enriching and renovating the French language, even after Buffon, even after Jean-Jacques. Not having at first within him a

¹ Some of his biographers say that he called himself the Abbé (and not the Chevalier) de Parcieux. Rivarol's beginnings are inextricable.

sufficient fire of inspiration and fountain-jet to give him a quite natural originality, he seeks this originality of expression by the literary way and a little from the outside. He attacks Dante, whose austere genius he fully appreciates. 'When he is beautiful, he says, he is incomparable. His lines stand upright by the mere strength of the substantive and the verb without the support of a single epithet.' In attacking this style, 'hungering after poetry,' rich without being delicate, full of a manly pride and a fantastic ruggedness, he hopes to prove his resourcefulness and to force the French language to do wonders in every direction. 'There is not, in his opinion, any poet who sets so many traps for his translator'; among these traps he counts the temerities and comparisons of every kind, some of which appear to him to be untranslatable in their crudeness. He prides himself on getting the better of them, on eluding them, on making them intelligible by expressing them in his own fashion. 'A foreign language, he says, by continually offering *lours de force* to an able translator, tries him so to say in every direction: he soon comes to know all that his language is able or not able to do; he exhausts its resources, but he increases its powers.' So we must not expect of Rivarol the true Dante; he feels the genius of his author, but he does not reproduce it, he does not religiously copy it. If he had had the idea of doing so, the century would not have tolerated him for a moment. Voltaire defied Rivarol to succeed; he said jestingly that he would never translate Dante into the *elevated style*, 'or that he would change his skin three times before escaping from the claws of that demon.' Rivarol has no intention of changing his skin, he is too well satisfied with his own. In translating he aims at that *elevated style* which was declared impossible; and, in making this effort, he thinks only of exercising his powers, of profiting by the occasion, of gaining a few spoils, a few trophies in respect of the genius of expression. Such is his idea, which appears to us to-day incomplete, but which was not vulgar.

In 1783 the Berlin Academy set for the subject of its prize the answer to the following question—*What has made the French language universal?—Why does it deserve this prerogative?—Is it to be presumed that it will retain it?*—Rivarol's *Discours*, which gained the prize, had

brilliancy, elevation, a number of just and subtle views expressed in happy images. Here we have a full-grown and already matured mind developing its reflections, and, in places, almost a great writer expressing them. Insisting on the essential quality of the French language, which is *clearness*, insomuch that, when this language translates an author, it really explains him, he added : ' If we do not find in it the diminutives and the prettinesses of the Italian language, its pace is more manly. Free from all the formulas invented by flatterers to please vanity, and by the weak to propitiate the powerful, it is the more adapted for conversation, the bond of society and the charm of all the ages ; and, since we must say it, it is of all languages *the only one which has a probity attached to its genius*. Confident, social, rational, it is no longer the French language, it is the language of humanity.' This remarkable *Discours*, which far outstripped by its style and thoughts the majority of academic works, gained Rivarol the esteem of Frederick the Great and obtained a real success in France and Europe.

It may be imagined that it had an influence on Rivarol's direction. With a mind that was both philosophical and literary, he devoted himself henceforth to the analysis of languages and of his own in particular. ' It is well, he had said, not to give too much clothing to one's thought ; one should, so 'to say, travel in languages, and, after having enjoyed the taste of the most celebrated, confine oneself within one's own.' Rivarol confined himself within his own in order to probe its depths, and, from this time, he conceived the plan of a Dictionary of the French language, which he continued to cherish in secret in spite of all the distractions of the world and of politics, to which he returned with more perseverance in exile, and the preliminary Discourse of which is still his best title to recommendation in the eyes of attentive readers.

Meanwhile he lived too much the brilliant, dissipated, mundane life, the life of pleasures, and, though hardly twenty-eight years of age,¹ he declared himself weary and aged :

' As to the life that I lead, he wrote to a friend (January 1785), it is so tedious a drama, that I always maintain that it was Mercier who wrote

¹ I suppose him to have been born in 1757. Otherwise he would be thirty-one years of age at that time.

it. Formerly I could make good in an hour eight days of follies, and now it takes me eight long days of wisdom to make good the folly of an hour. Ah! how well inspired you were to become a man of the country!

The drawing-rooms diverted Rivarol and turned his thoughts too much from serious glory. He shone there by his natural talent for improvisation, of which all who knew him spoke with admiration and bewilderment. He was a virtuoso of language. When once he was in verve, the fireworks from his lips were incessant. He launched not only epigrams, he scattered ideas and views; he made the sparkling sheaves of his eloquence diverge upon a multitude of objects at a time. When defining, in some excellent passages, wit and taste, he could not help defining his own taste, his own wit; one never goes very far, after all, in search of one's ideal:

'Wit, he says, is in general that faculty which sees quickly, which shines and strikes. I say *quickly*, for vivacity is its essence; an arrow and a flash of lightning are its emblems. Observe that I am speaking of the rapidity of the idea, and not of the time that its pursuit may have cost. . . . Genius itself owes its finest ideas, now to profound meditation, now to sudden inspirations. But, in the world, wit always improvises; it requires neither delay nor an appointment to say a happy word. It strikes more quickly than mere good sense; it is, in a word, *prompt and brilliant feeling*.'

He did not disguise from himself the fact that his brilliant talent which he carried about with him, which he showed off complacently in social circles, and which gave society pleasure, also made him the object of much envy and hostility: 'The man who carries his talent about with him, he thought, is continually offending people's vanities: they would rather read him, even though his style were inferior to his conversation.' But Rivarol, when talking, obeyed an irresistible Southern instinct. It gave him no trouble, no mental fatigue, and his indolence was satisfied with this kind of success, which was to him only the exercise of a delicate sybaritism and an enjoyment.

His vanity also found its satisfaction, for, when talking, he quite naturally took the lead; in his presence nobody thought of disputing this pre-eminence. His friends (for he had friends) assure us that in thus assuming the sceptre, he was not really proud: 'Regarding himself only as a happy combination of nature, convinced that he owed much more to his organisation than to study or labour, he only looked upon himself as a rarer and finer metal.'

That was his way of being modest. Like an artist, he felt that he was furnished with a wonderful instrument, and he played upon it before all. He vocalised. However, what people are ready to pardon in a singer, a pianist or a violinist, in a special talent, they are less ready to pardon in the intellectual order. When speech is confined to a single person it soon has the appearance of a usurpation, and Rivarol, trenchant, opinionative, imposing silence on others, never tried to escape the reproach of conceit which is inevitably mingled even with praise of his finest qualities. He displayed himself at once and everywhere in all the splendour and insolence of his wit. He was not warned by his moral and sympathetic sense.

In all other things his taste was delicate, keen, discriminating, and, though he did not sufficiently resist a tincture of study and preparation, Rivarol may be classed in the foremost rank of the eminent literary judges of the end of the last century. He had some much rarer and more elevated qualities than La Harpe, Marmontel, and his other contemporaries; he possessed capacity and distinction, joined to the most exquisite delicacy. In his judgments he thought especially of the fainty, and somebody was able to say that in literature he had 'more voluptuousness than ambition.' His taste, however, was too delicate and too amorous not to give loud expression to his feelings.

'Judgment, he said, contents itself with approving and condemning, but taste enjoys and suffers. It is to judgment what honour is to probity: its laws are delicate, mysterious, and sacred. *Honour is tender and easily wounded*: such is taste; and, whilst judgment measures itself with its object, or weighs it in the balance, taste needs only a glance to determine its approval or repugnance, I might almost say its love or its hatred, its enthusiasm or its indignation, so delicate, exquisite, and quick is it! So men of taste are the high justiciaries of literature. The spirit of criticism is a spirit of order; it recognises offences against taste and carries them before the tribunal of ridicule; for laughter is often the expression of its anger, and those who blame it do not sufficiently remember that the man of taste receives a thousand wounds before dealing one. They say that a man has the spirit of criticism, when he has received from Heaven not only the faculty of distinguishing the beauties and defects of the productions he criticises, but a soul which is impassioned for the former and angered by the latter, a soul that is charmed by the beautiful, carried away by the sublime, and which, furious against mediocrity, brands it with its disdain and crushes it with its indifference.'

This so well felt definition he spent his life in putting thirty-onc

he aroused. When Rivarol started in the literary career, the great writers who had given lustre to the century were already dead or on the point of disappearing: it was the turn of the mediocre and the minor writers. As in the evening of a warm summer's day, a swarm of insects were flying around and tormenting with their buzzing the honest indifferent. The whole century having turned to literature, praise and blame were dealt out with extravagance, but the praise preponderated. At Paris, nobody was taken in: 'In vain have the trumpets of Renown proclaimed this prose or that poetry; in this capital, said Rivarol, there are always thirty or forty incorruptible heads that are silent; this silence of the people of taste helps to salve the conscience of inferior writers and plagues them for the rest of their life.' But the provinces were taken in: 'It is time, he counselled, for many a journal to change its principle: they should observe in their praise the same sobriety that nature observes in the production of great talents, and cease to set traps for the innocence of the provinces.' It was this idea of order that one day suggested to Rivarol the publication of his *Petit Almanach de nos Grands Hommes pour l'année 1788*, in which all the ephemeral and imperceptible authors are arranged in alphabetical order, accompanied by an ironical eulogy. He made war upon a wasp's nest, and with great difficulty afterwards avoided thousands of stings.

This *Little Almanack of Great Men*, which had for its epigraph: *Dfs ignotis, To the unknown Gods*, is one of those pleasantries whose piquancy lies solely in their appropriateness. It may be observed that he begins with the name of a man who since acquired a certain celebrity in medicine, Alibert, and who was then only known for a fable inserted in a Collection of provincial Muses. Andrieux, Ginguené, who had so far figured only in the lighter kind of literature, are mentioned, as well as Marie-Joseph Chénier, who immediately took his revenge in a virulent satire.¹

¹ Rivarol had known André Chénier, and esteemed him highly; and by a cruel play of his pen, and as if by inadvertence, he several times spoke of Marie-Joseph as 'The brother of Abel Chénier' (see the *Spectateur du Nord*, 1797, vol. i, page 431). Abel suggests Cain. I need hardly say that this cruel blow was an injustice. Generally speaking M.-J. Chénier was, in spite of his errors, a man of a noble and generous soul.

When Rivarol quitted France, in 1791, he said with more humour than improbability : ' If the Revolution had taken place under Louis XIV, Cotin would have had Boileau guillotined, and Pradon would not have missed fire in his attack on Racine. By emigrating, I escaped a few Jacobins of my *Almanack of Great Men*.'

In 1782 Rivarol had attacked the Abbé Delille, then at the height of his success. In an anonymous publication, which was known to be his, he had criticised the poem *Les Jardins*, recently printed :

' It has ventured abroad at last, Rivarol said of this poem ; it has left an indulgent little world, which it has delighted for so many years, to appear before the severe eyes of the great world, which will ask for an explanation of its successes : a spoiled child, passing from the hands of women into those of men, and for which a more rigorous education is in preparation, it will be treated like every infant prodigy.'

Then follows a criticism which appeared bitter and excessive at the time, but which to-day is only too well justified. In general, there is in Rivarol the beginning and the stuff of many men who have since grown up and developed under other names. There is the beginning and the presentiment of a great innovating writer such as Chateaubriand has since appeared, of a great critic and poet such as André Chénier revealed himself : for instance, in his criticism of Delille he felt just as André Chénier must have done. We shall see presently that there was in him also the beginning of a Joseph de Maistre. But all these first intentions were prematurely intercepted and arrested by the mischance of circumstances, and above all by the spirit of the age in which Rivarol lived too long, into which he plunged too deeply to be able afterwards, even by the strength of his mind, to extricate himself.

Rivarol was only a transition man ; but as such he is of great importance, and we venture to say that he has not yet been rightly placed. His witticisms, his sallies, his epigrams are known and quoted in a hundred places ; there is room to dwell on his higher attempts.

In 1787 M. Necker published his book on the *Importance of Religious Ideas*. Rivarol wrote him two letters full of hardihood and thought, in which he teases him about his Deism. In these Letters, in which he frequently quotes Pascal and shows that he has penetrated his ideas, Rivarol adopts the point of view of an elevated Epicureanism which he soon had to modify, when the breaking out

of the Revolution demonstrated to him the political importance of religions.

As soon as ever the Revolution became pronounced, Rivarol did not hesitate, and took the side of the Court, or at least that of social preservation. Even before the 14 July he had denounced the war in the so-called *Journal politique-national*, published by the Abbé Sabatier. These articles of Rivarol have been since collected in a volume, and published under the title of *Memoirs*; but the collection was prepared without any care. The dates, the divisions of the articles, were suppressed; even some of the transitions were suppressed; the epigraphs too were suppressed, which headed each article, and which, borrowed from Horace, Virgil or Lucan, gave evidence even in controversy, of an eminently ornate mind: even in dealing his sword-thrusts, Rivarol was careful to display a few diamonds in the hilt.

In this Journal, the first number of which is dated the 12 July 1789, Rivarol shows himself, and that before Burke, one of the most vigorous political writers that the Revolution has produced. He relates what took place in the States-General before the union of the Orders, and his accounts follow the events in their course of development: 'Everything in this world has its decisive moment, said the Cardinal de Retz, and the masterpiece of good administration is to recognise and to seize this moment.' Rivarol shows that, if it ever existed, this moment was missed at the very beginning of the French Revolution. Speaking of the King's Declaration at the royal sitting of the 23 June, he asks himself why this declaration which, slightly modified, might have become *the great Charter of the French people*, had such an ill success; and the first reason he discovered is that it came too late: 'Human operations have their season, he says, like those of nature; six months earlier, this Declaration would have been received and proclaimed as the greatest benefit that any king had ever bestowed on his people; it would have obviated the idea, even the desire of calling the States-General.' He shows very palpably how questions came to change their character very quickly when once the minds of men had become so changeable: 'Those who raise public questions should consider how they alter their nature on the way. At first we are ex-

pected to make only a light sacrifice ; soon we are commanded greater ones ; in the end they are made impossible.' He divines, he denounces the secret idea, the passion which fires and fermentates all the questions of the time : ' Who would believe it ? it is not taxes, nor *lettres de cachet*, nor all the other abuses of authority, nor is it the persecutions of the Intendants nor the ruinous delays of Justice, that have most irritated the nation, it is the *prejudice of the nobility* for which they have manifested most hatred : which makes it evident that it is the bourgeoisie, the men of letters, the men of finance and in short all who were jealous of the nobility, who excited against them the populace of the cities and the peasants in the country.' He shows how the men of intellect, the men of wealth find nobility intolerable, and so intolerable that most of them end by buying it : ' But then began for them a new kind of torment, they were ennobled, they were noblemen, but they were not gentlemen. . . . The Kings of France cured their subjects of their plebeian origin much in the same way as they cured them of the scrofula, on condition that the traces remained.' This moral cause, vanity, which at that time was so powerful a factor in the irreconcilable hatred and the insurrection of the bourgeoisie incited by the demi-philosophers, is detected and exposed by Rivarol with a real superiority.

He adds images to ideas to make them penetrate more deeply; he is fond of expressing himself graphically; thus, in describing that fury for a universal levelling-down, he says : ' They have thrown down the public fountains on the pretext that they monopolised the water, and the water was wasted.'

Here are a few thoughts which neither a Machiavelli nor a Montesquieu would disown :

' The populace think they will gain their freedom better by attacking that of others.'

' If it is true that conspiracies are sometimes planned by men of intellect, they are always carried out by savage beasts.'

' If a flock appeals to tigers against its dogs, who will defend it against its new defenders ?'

' General rule : the nations whom kings assemble and consult begin by wishing and end by willing.'

' Woe to those who stir a nation to its depths !'

.Addressing those legislators who are so eager to placard

the Rights of Man at the head of their Constitution, he exclaims :

'Legislators, founders of a new order of things, you wish to see marching before you that science of metaphysics which the older legislators always had the wisdom to conceal in the foundations of their edifices. Ah ! do not be more learned than nature. If you wish that a great people should enjoy the shade and feed on the fruits of the tree you plant, do not leave its roots uncovered. . . .

'Why reveal to the world purely speculative truths ? Those who will not abuse them are the men who know them as you do, and those who have not been able to draw them from within themselves will never understand them, and will always abuse them.'

Rivarol is not however an *absolutist* writer, as we should say, and we must take care not to class him as such. He is careful to except from his severe blame philosophers like Montesquieu, 'who wrote with elevation to correct Governments and not to overthrow them.' He is energetic in his denunciation of the faults even of his own side : 'The populace of Paris, he says, and even that of all the cities of the kingdom, may still perpetrate many crimes before they can equal the follies of the Court. The whole of the present reign may be reduced to fifteen years of weakness and one day of ill-employed force.'

In the whole course of this Journal, Rivarol stands out a man of energy, brilliance and independence, and as one of those writers (and they are few in number) 'who are not corrupted by the event.' After the first numbers of the Journal had appeared, and in the interval between the 14 July and the return of M. Necker, the writer was accused of having sold himself to the Ministry :

'If that were so, exclaimed Rivarol, we have sold ourselves without being paid, which must be the case when the buyer does not exist ; and indeed, there is no Ministry at this moment. . . . The Courts, in truth, he adds, drawing himself up, sometimes implore the protection of men of letters as the impious call upon the saints in times of peril, but to as little effect : folly always deserves its misfortune.'

If we had anything to object to in this language, it would be rather the irony of the tone and that accent of disdain towards the very men he is defending, an accent that is too natural with Rivarol, that we shall find later in Chateaubriand, and which too cheaply satisfies the self-esteem of the speaker. The real political adviser is able to guard himself against this kind of quiet literary infatuation.

We are unable to point out all the salient and well thought-out ideas which appear in this Journal of Rivarol to one who reads it in the right place and situation. Here follow some ideas about Paris and her natural destination as a European city, which assuredly suggest the man of a very advanced, very enervated civilisation, and the political Epicurean rather than the citizen-soldier; we will give them however, even if they meet with the contradiction of our readers, because the reflections which they offer are not yet too out of date :

'Is Paris then a warlike city? Rivarol asks; is she not on the contrary a city of luxury and pleasure? The meeting-place of France and Europe, Paris is nobody's Fatherland, and one can only laugh at a man who calls himself a citizen of Paris. This capital is but a vast spectacle which must be open at all times: it is not liberty that she wants, that food for Republics is too indigestible for delicate Sybarites; it is security that she needs, and, if an army threatens her, she must be deserted in two days. Only a mild and respected Government could give Paris the repose necessary to her opulence and prosperity.

'The Capital has therefore acted against her interests in adopting Republican forms: she has been as ungrateful as impolitic in crushing that Royal authority, to which she owes her embellishments and her prodigious increase; and, since we must say it, it is rather for the whole of France to complain of what her kings have at all times done for the Capital, and for her alone. Ah! if the provinces ever open their eyes, if they some day discover how much their interests are, I will not say different, but opposed to the interests of Paris, how this city will be abandoned to herself! . . . Was it for thee then to commence an insurrection, insane City? Thy Palais-Royal has pushed thee over a precipice from which the Hôtel-de-Ville will not rescue thee.'

The Palais-Royal was punished where it had sinned; it was finally set upon the stool of penitence, and became moral.

We will add, as a corrective, that Rivarol's prognostic on Paris was not entirely verified: 'The grass will grow in thy dirty streets,' he exclaimed in his anathema. Paris has had many relapses since July '89, and has not ceased to gain and become more beautiful: it is true that she has only flourished in spite of these relapses and on their morrow, with the firm intention of making them good every time and blotting out their image. Only under respected Governments has her vitality conquered.

Having left France in 1791, Rivarol resided at first at Brussels, then in England, and then in Hamburg. In the last-named city he succeeded in establishing a sort of social centre and literary workshop; all the distinguished people who made a stay there grouped themselves around him.

He may be said to have throned there. Married, but separated from his wife, who was not free from the reproach of extravagance, he had brought with him a young person of the name of *Manette*, who plays a certain part in his intimate life: it was this person whom he advised, as she was unable to read, never to learn it; the well-known piece of poetry which he addressed to her ended as follows:

Ayez toujours pour moi du goût comme un bon fruit,
Et de l'esprit comme une rose.

I speak of *Manette* as a discreet way of hinting that Rivarol's morals were not as grave as befits a man who so openly defends the primordial principles of society and the religious bond of empires. He had his *Lisette* in a word, not to speak of mundane distractions, that is all I mean to say. A man of quite a literary mind, necessity made him conquer his indolence, and during his stay at Hamburg he resumed the compilation of his Dictionary of the French language, the *Preliminary Discourse* to which appeared in 1797. A notable part of this Discourse, which touched upon modern philosophy, could not at first be printed in France in consequence of the prohibition of the Minister of the Interior, François de Neufchâteau. It was some time before the work was printed there in entirety; it forms the first volume of Rivarol's *Complete Works* (1808), but with a few faults which spoil the sense. Those who are anxious to study it (and it deserves it) will do well to refer to the original edition.

Never did the Prospectus or Preface of a dictionary contain so many apparently foreign and disparate things. Rivarol brings in the whole range of metaphysics and politics. He considers speech as 'the experimental physics of the mind,' and he makes this the starting-point of an analysis of the mind, the understanding, of the whole human being in its constituent elements and its principal ideas: he compares it with the animals and indicates the essential differences in their natures: finally he devoted himself to eloquent considerations on God, on the passions, on religion, on the social superiority of religious beliefs compared with philosophy. In this latter part we find the Revolution and the Terror pictured from the moral point of view, sometimes recalling the idea, the

pen, and I venture to say, the verve of a Joseph de Maistre.

I neither intend, nor am I competent*to enter with Rivarol into the analysis which he attempts to make, after the manner of Condillac, of the human mind. I will confine myself to saying to those (and I know some of them) who would be inclined to disdain his effort, that, in this work, Rivarol is not a *littérateur* dabbling in ideology and metaphysics; he is more than that, he is a man who thinks, who reflects, and who, having mastered many points of his subject, puts his results into words, not at random, but like an able and often a consummate writer. Those who know the philosophy of M. de La Romiguière, and will take the trouble to read Rivarol, will find that it was from him that that distinguished and elegant professor must have borrowed his device of a compromise between *sensation* and *idea*, between Condillac and M. Royer-Collard, and of that middle term which has long been current in our schools under the name of *feeling*. That is enough on the subject. In my opinion it is Rivarol's glory that, whatever the order of ideas into which he penetrates, he always remains what he is essentially, a precise, brilliant writer, animated and apt with his metaphors. He never consents to admit the divorce between imagination and judgment. He proves very clearly, from the example of languages, that metaphors and images are so natural to the human mind, that even the most frugal and abstract mind cannot speak for any time without having recourse to them; and that, when we think we avoid them in writing, we really resort to images which, being old and hackneyed, no longer strike either the writer or the readers as such. For if Locke and Condillac 'both equally lacked the secret of expression, of that happy power of words which so deeply furrows the attention of men and shakes up their imagination, shall we commend them for this powerlessness?' And he concludes with the words: 'Fine images wound only envy.'

In order to be more striking, many of these pages of Rivarol had only to appear a few years earlier, in presence of judges less scattered and under the sun of the fatherland. The sentiment which animates the last chapters, and which makes this man whose heart is too withered by the air of the drawing-rooms, to rise from the midst of the universal

catastrophe and, by his intelligence, to swim on the surface, reminds me somewhat of the movement of a shipwrecked sailor clinging to the ship's mast and stretching his arms to the shore. Heaven opens before his eyes, and at last God appears to him :

'I need, like the universe, he exclaims, a God to save me from the chaos and the anarchy of my ideas. . . . The idea of Him delivers our mind from its long torments, and our heart from its vast solitude.'

'Admirable thing ! unique and veritable fortune of the human understanding ! he says again in a very sincere tone which cannot be mistaken ; the objections against the existence of God are exhausted, and the proofs in favour of it increase every day : they grow and march in three orders : in the interior of bodies, all the substances and their affinities ; in the heavens, all the globes and the laws of attraction ; in the middle, nature, animated by all her pomps.'

There is a fourth order which is no less essential, which consists in seeing and demonstrating God and His Providence even in the catastrophes and calamities of empires. Rivarol omits this tempestuous order of objections and proofs, and remains half-way. He does not attain to the religious philosophy of history.

Coming to the human passions, Rivarol analyses and defines them with a coloured precision which is peculiar to him. He shows how much more men are guided by their passions than by their ideas, and he gives a piquant example in action and in an apologue :

'Somebody says to Voltaire in the Elysian Fields : *So you wished men to be equal ?—Yes.—But do you know that a terrible Revolution was needed for that ?—No matter.—*He is speaking to his ideas.

'—*But do you know (somebody adds) that Fréron's son is proconsul, and is devastating the provinces ?—Ah ! gods ! what a horror !—*He is speaking to his passions.'

Rivarol is full of these particular touches and examples, of what the Ancients called the *lights of discourse*.

He ends with attacking the great and new passion which has produced the national fever and the frenzy with which France has been seized : it is the philosophic passion, the philosophic fanaticism. It was hitherto believed that the word fascination was only applicable to religious ideas and beliefs : it was reserved for the end of the eighteenth century to show that it applied no less to philosophy, and it immediately resulted in monstrous effects.

And here, in a diatribe of an incredible verve and invective, Rivarol takes the modern philosophers to task

as the fathers, some of them unconsciously, others consciously and willingly, of disorder and anarchy. He shows them to be possessed of a mania for analysis that stops and recoils before nothing, which carries dissolvents and decomposition into every social matter :

' In physics they have discovered only arguments against the Author of nature ; in metaphysics only doubt and subtleties ; morality and logic have only furnished them with declamatory arguments against the political order, against religious ideas and the laws of property ; they have aspired to nothing less than the reconstruction of everything, by a revolt against everything ; and, forgetting that they were themselves in the world, they have pulled down the pillars of the world. . . .

' What should we say of an architect who, commissioned to erect a building, should break up the stones in order to discover in them salts, air, and an earthy foundation, and who offered us an analysis instead of a house ? . . .

' True philosophy is to be an astronomer in astronomy, a chemist in chemistry, and a politician in politics.

' These philosophers have believed, however, that to define men is better than to unite them ; that to emancipate them was greater than to govern them, and that to excite them to sedition was better than to make them happy. They have overthrown States in order to regenerate them, and have dissected living men in order to know them better. . . .'

When he wrote these eloquent and fiery pages (and there are eighty of them in succession in the same tone), Rivarol was evidently thinking of those men with whom he had spent so many years and whom he knew from their strong and weak sides, the Chamforts, the Condorcets, the Garats. There are some personal touches which shoot out in all directions like arrows, and which are aimed at something more than an idea or a theory. Though he does not name them, we may see very well, by his flashing looks, by the sureness of his gestures, that he is face to face with this or that opponent. But what also honours Rivarol's intelligence and humanity, is that there rises from the midst of all this a cry of lost civilisation, the anguish of a noble and powerful mind that thinks it feels the whole social conquest slipping away : '*In spite of all the efforts of a philosophical century, he says, the most civilised empires will ever be as near to barbarism as the most polished metal is to rust ; nations like metals shine only on the surface.*'

There are moments when, carried away by the movement of his subject and the impulsion of social thought, he flies so high, that we ask ourselves whether it is indeed Rivarol who is writing, that Rivarol who was born above

RIVAROL

all a delicate voluptuary, and whether it is not rather a man of the religious school :

'The radical vice of philosophy is that it is unable to speak to the heart. Now, the mind is the partial side of man ; the heart is everything. . . . Hence religion, even the most ill-conceived, is infinitely more favourable to the political order, and more conformable to human nature in general, than philosophy, because it does not tell man to love God *with all his mind*, but *with all his heart* : it seizes us on that *vast and feeling* side which is more or less the same in all individuals, and not on the *reasoning, unequal, and limited* side, which is called *mind*.'

Is it not a believer who is speaking ? and can it be that he is only a repentant philosopher who has turned politician, an unbeliever cured of the folly of impiety ? And this again :

'Let history remind you that wherever you see a mingling of religion and barbarism, it is always religion that triumphs ; but that wherever you see a mingling of barbarism and philosophy, it is barbarism that prevails. . . . In a word, philosophy divides men through their opinions, religion unites them in the same principles ; there is then an eternal contract between politics and religion. *Every State, if I may venture to say so, is a mysterious vessel that has its anchors in Heaven.*'

Roederer, in the course of time, attempted to reply to this part of Rivarol's work ; but he only touched upon details, without grasping its real import and measuring its compass.

I was anxious to indicate these elevated points of Rivarol's thought. His witticisms, his sallies, are everywhere. I myself once published a whole sheaf of them collected from a conversation noted down by Chénedollé.¹ But the social side of the final Rivarol has been left too much in the shade : it was very well pointed out to me in a few words of M. Malitourne's article (*Biographie universelle*).

Rivarol, who had been a few months in Berlin, was there seized in April 1801 with a malady which carried him away in a few days. We are told that when he was dying he desired his room to be filled with flowers, and that, in his delirium, he asked for *Attic figs and nectar*. That is a Mirabeau-like death composed for him, which is at least in harmony with the idea we formed of his dream.²

¹ *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1 June 1849, page 724 ; and in the second volume of my work entitled, *Chateaubriand et son Groupe littéraire*.

² A few particulars about the death of Rivarol and his last words may be found in the second volume, page 357, of the *Mémoires sur la Révolution et l'Émigration*, by M. Dampmartin (1825).

as Rivarol was not a man of genius, but he was more than
a man of wit : he entirely realised the ideal of the man of
talent, such as he defined him : ' Talent is an art mingled
with enthusiasm.' It is a pity that this talent, in him, was
a little spoiled by ostentation and affectation. His style
sometimes gives one the effect of a glossy and rustling
material. His thought was very often sounder than its
expression. Towards the end, he was better than his
morals. If we penetrate the veneer of conceit in which he
was clothed, we come to see the good sense in him ; and
as a last word of praise for this brilliant man, who was so
much in vogue, we may say that those who study him
closely will only speak of him with esteem.

THE DUCHESSE D'ANGOULÊME

Monday, 3 November 1851.

COMING a little late, and after all the other organs of publicity, to pay homage, in our way, to a lofty virtue and an immense misfortune, we can but repeat more or less what has been said and felt by all. There is a point of view however, if such a word may be permitted in presence of a figure so simple and true, and the most alien to every solemn attitude, there is a point of view which we shall more particularly adopt. Everything changes, everything dies or renews itself; the most ancient and revered races have their end; nations even, before falling and ending, have their successive forms of existence and put on different forms of government at their different ages; what was religion and fidelity at one time is no more than a monument and commemoration of the past at another; but through it all, as long as depravity has not set in, there is something that remains: humanity and the natural feelings by which it is distinguished, respect for virtue, for misfortune, especially if undeserved and innocent, pity which is itself only a name for piety towards God insofar as it is directed towards human misfortunes. In speaking of Madame the Duchesse d'Angoulême, we appeal to all these feelings that are independent of politics, to the sympathetic and enduring part of our being.

The dominating feature in this long life of suffering and martyrdom from early youth, and of upheaval and vicissitudes always, is a perfect truthfulness, a perfect simplicity, and we may say a complete and unchangeable uniformity. That upright, just and noble soul became crystallised at an early age, and at no time since did it ever vacillate. It became fixed during the very years

which for every young life are the years of lightheartedness, joy and the first bloom, during those three years and four months of captivity in the Temple when she witnessed the death, one after another, of her father, her mother, her aunt and brother. She entered the prison before she was fourteen years of age, and she left it on the day when she became seventeen. At that age, the features of her face had not yet assumed those pronounced and rather strong forms under which we know her. The portrait we have of her at that Temple period—a profile with the hair carelessly tied up in a knot—is refined in its correctness, noble and serious without any exaggeration. Misfortune, weighing on her brow, has not yet set upon it that mark which becomes pronounced a few years later, and which, as she grows older, gives her more and more resemblance to Louis XVI. But at the end of this year 1795, if the outside still preserved something of its first youth, the soul was mature, it was henceforth fully developed and inured. The constitution, so strong and sound, was impaired? The liver suffered and was disordered. This tender offshoot of so long and illustrious a race was struck and perhaps withered even in its future branches. On leaving the Temple, if we may dare to form an idea of those mysteries of grief, it seems to me that the life like the soul of Madame Royale was finished in all its essentials; it was closed on the side of the future: all its sources and all its roots lay henceforth in the past. Our heart, if there has been any momentous day in our life, attaches or brings back our sensibilities to a certain hour, that hour which we are apt to hear strike when we commune with ourselves and indulge in reveries. Madame the Duchesse d'Angoulême, who did not indulge in reveries, but who prayed, when she communed with herself (which she did continually) heard that same hour strike, which was that of the Temple clock and the agony of her parents.

She has told the story of her captivity and the events which occurred in the Temple from the day on which she entered it to the day when her brother died, and she has done so in a simple, correct, precise style, without a superfluous word, without any declamation, as befits a deep heart and an honest mind speaking in all sincerity of griefs, of those truly unspeakable griefs which exceed expression. She is as oblivious of her own self, and

that without any affectation, as she can be; and she stops at the moment of her brother's death, the last of the four immolated victims. Let us speak of her more than she has done of herself.

Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte of France, born on the 19 December 1778, was the first child of Louis XVI and Queen Marie-Antoinette. The Queen had been seven years married, when one day she confided to her intimates her first joy as a spouse and her future hopes. About a year after Madame was born. If hitherto Louis XVI's timidity in presence of his young wife had been extreme, his passion at this moment was not less so, and this child, the first fruit of it, was destined to be in great part his image. Goodness, uprightness, all the substantial and virtuous qualities of her father were directly transmitted to the heart of Madame, and Marie-Antoinette, with all her grace, could not even prevent a little of that rudeness of gesture and accent, which covered Louis XVI's virtues, from gliding into the quite frank nature of her daughter. She also neglected to transmit to her that quality which women so easily acquire, the desire to please and the nascent awakening of even the most innocent and the most legitimate coquetry. Madame Royale never had an idea or a suspicion of it. Or rather, if she had any trace of it at the beginning, this trace disappeared entirely in the trials of her oppressed and desolate childhood and youth. In order to understand the Duchesse d'Angoulême, we cannot too often repeat it: everything that we call bloom and first joy, that gay and enchanting aspect under which, on our entry into life, we naturally see all things, was for her early suppressed and nipped in the bud. Her soul, before it had lost its first bloom, was at the very outset reduced and as it were worn to the thread: a strong and indestructible thread which offered powerful resistance to every attack, which was strengthened in tears and prayers, but which cast from it, like a lie, everything in the nature of grace and ornament. For one who had wept real tears and never ceased to weep them, that would have been a lie indeed.

If she appears to have taken naturally after her father more than after her mother, there is one virtue at least that she inherited from the latter, and which was wanting in the poor Louis XVI for his salvation: I mean firmness,

70 THE DUCHESSE D'ANGOULÊME

courage to act in decisive moments. In her life, so august and modest, and, as a rule, so alien to politics, the Duchesse d'Angoulême had once at least, at Bordeaux, occasion to show that she possessed that courage to act which came from her mother and her grandmother Marie-Thérèse. Similarly in 1830; when she joined the royal family at Rambouillet, after the mistakes had been committed, her first impulse, as in 1815 at Bordeaux, was to fight and resist.

She was not yet eleven years of age when, with the terrible events of October 1789, she began to play her part in public at her mother's side. She had to appear at the balcony or to withdraw from it at the bidding of a furious populace, and, in this flow and ebb of the popular storm, the meaning of which she endeavoured to divine, she was sensible of only one thing, the grasp of her mother's hand when she pressed her to her bosom with the coldness of death.

At the same time, during this residence at the Tuileries, to which the royal family was confined, she learned, both from her mother, who became every day more serious, from her noble aunt Élisabeth and from her father, lessons of a practical and solid nature, and received examples of an unchangeable family religion. Her inner education was that of a child of the most chaste and united of noble families, with the addition, night and day, of mortal alarms and anxieties.

With an artless simplicity she has related the story of the flight of the 20 June 1791 and the journey to Varennes. The King and Queen had at last decided to make their escape, and they did not inform Madame Élisabeth until the very day. At five o'clock in the afternoon the Queen went out walking with her children to Tivoli. The little Marie-Thérèse remarked that her father and mother looked very disturbed and preoccupied since early morning :

'During our walk, she says, my mother took me aside, told me that I need not be disturbed by anything that I saw, that we should never be long parted, but should soon meet again. My mind was locked up, and I could not understand it at all: she embraced me, and told me that if these ladies (the ladies of the household and the suite) asked me why I was so agitated, I should tell them that she had been scolding me and that I had made it up with her. We returned at seven o'clock, I went back to my apartments very sad, and quite puzzled by what my mother had said to me.'

It was in this series of alarms, mysteries and painful nightmares that she spent those years and that sleep, ordinary so light, of childhood.

When she entered the Temple, there was an end of mysteries, and the veil was rent from top to bottom. To her the world appeared to be sharply divided into two parts, the good and the wicked: the wicked, that is to say all that the human imagination, in hours of peace and social regularity, has difficulty in picturing to itself in all its nakedness, brutality in all its grossness and meanness, vice and envy in all the ignoble intoxication of their triumph and in their greatest refinements of cruelty; the good, that is to say the few, pathetic, weeping, timid, sweetening their misfortune by stealth and in concealment.

For the young heart of Madame Royale not to conceive from this moment an irreconcilable hatred and an irreparable contempt for the human race, to preserve its serenity, its innocence, its faith, its hope for the good, it needed the divine examples and the succour she saw around her, especially in her Aunt Élisabeth, that celestial person; it needed that precise, practical religion, at which no freethinker will ever have the right to smile, since it alone has the power to sustain and to comfort such griefs. One day (20 April 1793) the wretched Hébert entered the prison with a few *municipals* at ten o'clock at night: the prisoners had just gone to bed:

'We got up hurriedly, says Madame Royale. They read to us an order of the Commune which authorised them to search us at their discretion, which they did most punctiliously, not forgetting even the mattresses. My poor brother was asleep; they rudely pulled him out of his bed to search it; my mother took him, quite stiff with cold. They took from my mother a tradesman's address which she had kept, a stick of sealing-wax from my aunt, and from me a Sacred Heart of Jesus and a Prayer for France. Their visit did not end till four o'clock in the morning. . . . They were furious at having found nothing but these trifles.'

This Sacred Heart of Jesus and this Prayer for France are more closely connected than it would seem, and it needed perhaps a perfect faith in the one to be able to pray for the other at that moment.

It has sometimes been said that Madame d'Angoulême cherished a feeling of rancour against her country, and that on her return in 1814 and 1815 she involuntarily

showed this disposition in some of her words ; for, with regard to her acts, it would be impossible to find anything to reproach her with. But those who knew her best and are most worthy of belief, assert that such was very far from being her disposition. She was frank and true ; she was even a little rude and brusque in her address, like her father. Incapable of an evil thought, but also of pretence, if she did not love you, it was impossible for her to say or lead you to believe the contrary. ' She was the most loyal gentleman, who never lied,' somebody said of her. She loved her friends, she forgave her enemies ; but, in the religion of her race and her misfortune, she believed in the faithful and the infidel, the good and the wicked : can we be astonished at it ?

The narrative she has traced of the events of the Temple was written in the Temple itself during the last months of her detention and after the extreme rigour had been relaxed. She is not afraid of alluding to a few of the municipal officers who, when taking their turn at sentry duty, entered into the griefs of the royal family and mitigated them by their considerate and sympathetic conduct :

' We knew at once the sort of man we had to do with, she says, especially my mother, who several times saved us from giving way to wrong tokens of interest. . . . I know all those who took an interest in us ; I will not name them, for fear of compromising them in the present state of things, but their memory is graven on my heart ; if I am unable to show them my gratitude, God will reward them ; but if some day I am able to name them, they shall be loved and esteemed by all virtuous persons.'

This royal maiden, who naturally believes in the prerogatives of her race, wishes to express by those words her belief that fidelity to one's kings in misfortune is a duty and a virtue ; but, even though that was not quite what she thought, she was not mistaken in what she said so straightforwardly and artlessly ; what she says is still true : for what was no longer perhaps a duty to fidelity, was at least a duty to humanity, for whoever passed the threshold of the Temple in those three years and showed compassion for such misfortunes, deserves our esteem, and he who crossed it without being touched and offering his service, bears a stigma.

In this accurate, methodical, sensible and pathetic

story, Madame gives the measure of her precocious reason and her good judgment in matters of the heart. She is much impressed by the dignified bearing of her mother who, when the noble prisoners were addressed on various pretexts, generally preserved silence: 'My mother, as usual, replied not a word, writes Madame apropos of some new and insulting order that was announced to them, she did not appear to hear it even; often her contemptuous calm and her dignified bearing impressed them: they rarely presumed to address her.' Only on the first day of Louis XVI's trial, after she had seen him led away to be questioned at the bar of the Convention, only on that day does Marie-Antoinette succumb to her anxiety and break her generous silence: 'My mother had tried every means with the *municipals* who guarded her to learn what was going on; it was the first time that she deigned to question them.' In this quite simple narrative that no one can read without tears, there are some touches which make a deep impression, and which the pen that writes them does not suspect. Madame has a sore foot (chilblains in consequence of the cold), and at the same time a more internal complaint. Meanwhile Louis XVI is condemned. His family, who had hoped to see him again a last time, and to embrace him on the morning of his death, is in a state of desolation which may be imagined:

'But nothing, writes Madame, was capable of calming my mother's anguish; we could not instil any hope into her: it was become a matter of indifference to her whether she were dead or alive. She looked at us sometimes with a pity that sent a thrill through us. *Happily the grief increased my complaint, which gave her occupation.* They sent for my physician. . . .'

Happily, this word inadvertently dropped in this picture of grief has a strange effect and could not have been matched by Bossuet.

M. de Chateaubriand, who must not be confounded here (as has too often been done) with Bossuet, was thinking of these painful scenes in the Temple, when he said in *Atala*, by the mouth of Father Aubrey: 'The dweller in the hut and the dweller in the palace, all suffer, all sigh here below; queens have been seen weeping like mere women, and people have been astonished at the quantity of tears that the eyes of kings contain.'

74 THE DUCHESSE D'ANGOULÈME

A popular poet, alluding to this celebrated sentence, but continuing to contrast the different classes, has said :

De l'œil des rois on a compté les larmes ;
Les yeux du peuple en ont trop pour cela.

This idea of contrasts, I can assure him, could never occur to one who has just read the simple Christian and human story of Madame Royale in the Temple. All party spirit is disarmed and expires after reading it, and there is no room for anything but deep compassion and admiration. Meekness, piety, modesty, animate these pages of the wounded young girl. She spends the winter of 1793-1794 alone with Madame Élisabeth : ' We were often addressed by the familiar *thou* during the winter, she says. We despised all the vexations they put upon us, but this last degree of coarseness always made my aunt and me turn red.' The most cruel moment for her was when, after the death of her father, after the disappearance of her mother and her aunt, ignorant of the final fate of those two dear heads, in the weeks preceding the 9 Thermidor, she heard her brother at a distance, already a prey to the corrupters, and taught by the cobbler Simon to sing atrocious songs :

' For my own part, she says, I only asked for the bare necessities ; they were often harshly refused. But at least I kept myself neat ; I had soap and water ; I swept my room every morning ; I was finished at nine o'clock when the guards came in with my breakfast. I had no light ; but during the long days I suffered less from this privation. They would not give me any more books : I had none but books of piety, and some travels that I had read a thousand times.'

At last, after the 9 Thermidor, the Convention relaxed in its rigour : public opinion made its voice heard, and pity dared to murmur. One of the commissioners charged to visit the young princess in the Temple has described her in her dignified attitude, suffering and impoverished, sitting and knitting near the window and at a distance from the fire (she had not enough light by the fire-place to work by), her hands swollen by the cold and covered with chilblains (for they did not give her enough wood to warm her at that distance). For the first time they showed themselves considerate and desired to mitigate her lot. Her first impulse was to be incredulous, silent, and to decline. When she was asked about a piano that

was in the room and which they thought might amuse her, she replied : ' No, Sir, this piano is not mine, it belongs to the Queen ; I have never touched it, and I never shall touch it.' Asked about her library, which was composed of the *Imitation of Jesus Christ* and a few books of devotion, and which were perhaps insufficient to divert her : ' No, Sir, she replied again ; these books are precisely the only ones which suit my situation.'

During the time which passed between the 9 Thermidor and the liberation of the Princess in the last days of the year 1795, quite a Royalist literature tried to spring up around her. Sentimental ballads were composed and sung to her from a distance, which informed her in the refrain that friends were henceforth watching over her destiny. Some of them celebrated the goat and the dog which she had latterly been allowed to keep, and which could be seen in her company in the prison garden from neighbouring windows. The Duchesse d'Angoulême was or may have been the centre of an extensive contemporaneous literature which could be traced, from M. Lepitre's ballad, which was sung under the walls of the Temple, to *Irma ou les Malheurs d'une Jeune Orpheline, Histoire indienne, avec des romances*, a novel published by Madame Guénard in the year VIII, to the *Antigone* of Ballanche which more nobly crowns this allegorical and mythological literature in 1814. But it is characteristic of the Duchesse d'Angoulême that she remained totally ignorant of this rather tardy invasion of public sentimentality. It is to her honour that she never allowed literature, novel, drama, to be introduced into the, for ever veiled, sanctuary of her grief. ' I do not like scenes,' she said one day rather brusquely, at the Tuilleries, to a woman who threw herself at her feet as she was passing, to thank her for some benefit. She had witnessed too many and too frightfully real scenes to bear the semblance of them. The deep sincerity of her grief and her filial affliction had the same effect in this respect as the severest and most enlightened taste could have desired. All this more or less exalted literature, in the style of Madame Cottin, which was stirring around the youth of Madame Royale, evidently did not affect her in the least, and the narrative she drew up in 1795 of the events of the Temple might be regarded as a criticism of all those other stories and those unreal

76 THE DUCHESSE D'ANGOULÊME

pictures which circulated round her, if one could even think of comparing them. Even in the extreme of her grief she showed great good sense.

After leaving France, at Vienna, then at Mittau where she is married to her cousin, everywhere, in the different places of exile whither she was tossed by fortune, she is the same : the life of the Temple is there, as it were in the depth of her oratory, regulating each of her days and dictating the employment of them. Subject to her uncle, in whom she sees both a king and a father, she thinks only of uniting all her religions and faithfully practising them. An extremely touching scene, which has been well described by one of her historians (M. Nettement), is that which takes place at Mittau, in May 1807, when she insists on tending and assisting to the last the Abbé Edgeworth de Firmont, the same priest who had accompanied Louis XVI to the scaffold. A contagious fever had broken out among the French prisoners brought to Mittau in consequence of the war. The Abbé Edgeworth had visited them and contracted this malady, a kind of typhus ; and in these extreme circumstances Madame d'Angoulême determined not to leave him : ' The less he is conscious of his needs and his position, she said, the more necessary is the presence of a friend. . . . Nothing shall prevent my nursing the Abbé Edgeworth myself ; I ask nobody to accompany me.' She wished to requite him, as far as lay in her power, for the comfort and succour he had given to Louis XVI at the moment of death. The Duchesse d'Angoulême continually lived and resided in this order of thoughts, and never for a single day allowed herself to be turned aside from them.

Did Madame d'Angoulême ever know a real day of happiness after her leaving the Temple ? Was there ever room in that heart, which had been saturated with agony, from her tenderest youth, for real unmixed joy ? It is hard to believe, in spite of everything, that she did not feel as it were an unexpected and gushing spring of it in those great moments of 1814, in that year which must have seemed to her to be filled at every step with the wonders and the striking evidences of a Providence. This kind of exhilaration however, if she ever felt it, could not prevail against the events at Bordeaux, and that new and bitter experience of human frailty and infidelity.

She was, as is well known, in that city when she heard of Napoleon's landing in Provence (March 1815). Obeying the impulse of her maternal blood, Madame d'Angoulême thought of offering resistance; and she did everything to organise it that could be expected of a noble and virile character. Public opinion in the city was favourable and devoted to her; it was the troops and the garrison that appeared doubtful, the moment that the eagle and the great captain reappeared. But she, although warned by the generals, could not bring herself to believe that there was any doubt about that fidelity, since, only the day before, she had received from those men, whose bravery she was sure of, reiterated expressions of homage and oaths of allegiance. The historians of the Restoration have given a very good account of those scenes in which Madame d'Angoulême figures, and all agree in praising her active courage and her attitude. She went through the barracks, she tried to electrify the soldiers, she appealed to their honour, all to no avail; she found that their hearts were closed, that they had returned to their old love. After exhausting all her efforts, and on the point of departing, she turned to the generals who had accompanied her and said to them that she relied upon them at least to pledge the inhabitants against any reaction: 'We swear it!' exclaimed the generals raising their hands.—'I do not ask you to swear, she replied with a movement of contemptuous pity; I have had enough swearing; *I want no more of it.*'¹ These haughty words she was entitled to utter, and certainly few persons have had more ocular evidence than she of the lengths to which, according to the times, human wickedness or versatility can go.

Mirabeau had said of Marie-Antoinette: 'The King has only one man, that is his wife.' Napoleon said something to the same effect about Madame d'Angoulême for her conduct at Bordeaux. These praises, even if they are a little exaggerated, serve as an indication at a distance and record themselves in history.

The Second Restoration was unable to restore her buoyancy; on returning to the Tuileries, she found Fouché, a regicide, King's Minister. Her straightforward and inviolable religion could not for a single moment ap-

¹ *Histoire des deux Restaurations*, by M. de Vaulabelle

78 THE DUCHESSE D'ANGOULÊME

prove of these monstrous compromises which even politics can hardly comprehend, and certainly did not demand. From this moment in 1815, we do not meet with Madame d'Angoulême in connection with any political act properly speaking, and her whole life is devoted to the family and the home.

I have questioned about her men who have been much in contact with her, and this is what I have gleaned. One day was like another for her, except those mournful days which were marked as the most painful anniversaries. She rose early, say at half-past five o'clock; about six or seven she heard mass quite alone. It is supposed that she frequently communicated, but she was not seen to do so, except perhaps on the great days. There was no solemnity, no pomp; a humble Christian, she gave her whole mind to these religious acts; she did holy things discreetly and secretly.

At early morning she was busy about her apartments and her chamber, working at the Tuileries almost as she used to do at the Temple.

She never spoke of the painful and heartrending things of her youth, unless it were to a very small number of persons of her intimate acquaintance. On the 21 January and the 16 October, the anniversaries of the death of her father and mother, she locked herself up alone, or sometimes she sent for some lady who was in unison of grief and piety with her (the late Madame de Pastoret, for instance), to help her to pass these cruel days.

She gave alms to a degree that cannot be known, and would be difficult to find out; those who were best informed about her works of charity every day discover new ones which seem to rise out of the ground, and that nobody knew of. In this respect she truly belonged to the direct lineage of Saint Louis.

Her life was as simple and regular as one could imagine, either at the Tuileries or since in exile. The conversation in her home was very unrestrained. In those times when misfortune cried a truce around her, it was remarked that she showed a certain disposition to cheerfulness and gaiety, which must, alas! too seldom have had an outlet. But in intimacy and on her best days, she went so far as to listen to, if not to utter, humorous things. When she felt herself sure of her company she was not

afraid of a certain degree of pleasantry. When on fête-days she happened to have plays performed for her amusement, she did not choose the most serious ones.

In spite of her familiarity with troubles, a certain joyousness showed on the surface, as we sometimes find in austere souls that have known trials, and have been at all times guided and comforted by religion.

Politics did not come within her province, and she was not fond of public affairs. She was not amenable to influence. Her policy, which in itself might have been sensible, was entirely regulated by the desires of the King. She thought that when the King decidedly wished a thing, to resist his wishes was not permitted even in the best of Royalists. MM. de Villèle and Corbière, in resisting the King, made her as angry as even the Liberals might have done.

She was well read, after the fashion of Louis XVI; she read books of travels, history, morality and religion. If her readings lacked a certain vivacity in the worldly and literary sense, in the political and profane sense, if the intelligence and the breath of the new century did not penetrate into these narrow horizons, can we be astonished? can we pity her? and did not she gain more than she lost, by her constant faith and the stability of her trust in Heaven?

The letters of her which have been quoted, and probably all that she wrote, are simple, sensible, a little dry at bottom, and offer nothing remarkable.

Few notable sayings of hers are quoted. Her heart, however, sometimes prompted them. Apropos of the war in Spain, when she heard of the liberation of King Ferdinand by the French army, she exclaimed: 'It is then proved that it is possible to save a king in misfortune!'

In her last exile at Frohsdorf she was visited in December 1848 by a French traveller (M. Charles Didier), who ventured to say to her: 'Madame, it is impossible but you must have seen the finger of God in the fall of Louis-Philippe.'—'*It is in everything,*' she replied with simplicity, with a tact that comes from religion and the heart.

It was this same moral delicacy which, in her marriage with the Duc d'Angoulême, made her constantly forget

that there was any inequality, to her advantage, in the union. She took care always to place him in the foreground : a delicacy the more real because one does not know whether she was conscious of it.

I have indicated the order of feelings in which we must be satisfied to seek and admire her. Do not expect of this soul, bruised and bereaved at so early an age, either intellectual coquetry or airy grace. She would have regarded as a profanation and a kind of sacrilege the idea of turning her misfortune and that of her family, her virtue and the respectful interest she inspired, into a means of politics, of success and attraction, even for what she believed to be the good cause. She would have accused herself before God ; and when she was directly reminded of the dear ones she had lost, she could only veil herself and withdraw with tears and sobs.

We have sufficiently indicated this august physiognomy which nobody is tempted to misjudge : solidity, good sense, goodness, a certain amount of gaiety, as I have said, a perfect simplicity, such are the characteristics of which this nature was composed. Religion and charity had placed the stamp of the sublime upon it. Her religion was the most practical, the most uniform and the most alien to any desire to produce an effect on others and to every worldly consideration. No one ever bore a greater misfortune, and that in a simpler, a more Christian-like and at the same time a more natural manner.

Madame d'Angoulême died at Frohsdorf on the 19 October 1851, at the age of seventy-two years and ten months, and in the twenty-first year of her last exile. Her previous exile had lasted eighteen years (not counting the Hundred Days). This was preceded by an imprisonment in the Temple of more than three years, and a forced residence at the Tuileries of nearly three more years in the midst of sedition. That is the framework of this destiny of grief and sacrifice, on which Antiquity would immediately have shed poetry and the ideal, but which allows us only a glimpse of an inner beauty, half-veiled, as befits a Christian age.

LA HARPE

Monday, 10 November 1851.

THE life of this first lieutenant of Voltaire, who called Voltaire *papa*, whom Voltaire called *my son*, and who, converted on his death-bed, greeted Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme* and almost blessed its author, is most varied and complicated. It would require a whole volume if we wished to trace it from point to point. Fortunately La Harpe's character is much more simple, and, converted or no, we find him just the same. It is the character of the man and the *littérateur* that we shall try to determine and bring to light.

Gifted with a great facility of production and a great aptitude for criticism, with an ardour of self-esteem which appears to be inherent in the literary temperament, and with an excessive irritability in the matter of taste, La Harpe, on his entry into the world of letters, made himself enemies in ever-increasing numbers during the course of his ill-contrived variations, and their animosity did much to embitter his life and to distort and misrepresent many circumstances of it. His birth in the first place formed the subject of many fables. It was asserted that he was the natural son of an invalid soldier and a cook. It was added that he came into the world near a corner-post of the Rue de La Harpe, implying that that was the origin of his name. Direct documentary evidence refutes these inventions or insinuations of calumny. In the useful and scrupulous investigations he has made at the Hôtel de Ville into the births of more or less celebrated Parisians, M. Ravenel has extracted from the official registers the following notes relative to La Harpe, which are as accurate and precise as one could wish: 'Jean-François *Delaharpe* was born at Paris, in

the parish of Saint-Nicolas-du-Chardonnet, on the 20 November 1739. He is the only one of the children of J.-F. Delharpe and Marie-Louise Devienne whose name is spelt *Delaharpe* on the baptismal register. The father always signs himself *Delharpe*, and on the death register of a daughter who died at the age of ten years, on the 3 November 1751, he assumes the qualities of *gentil-homme* and *officier suisse*.¹ It is quite true moreover that a sister of La Harpe's was married to a glazier of Paris. The extreme poverty to which La Harpe's parents were reduced largely concealed the vein of nobility there might have been in his extraction. 'He was not ten years of age when his father died (6 May 1749): he was a little over sixteen when he lost his mother, who died (16 February 1756) at the *Hôtel-Dieu*.'

La Harpe did not speak of his birth until later in life; whether from real contempt for half-calumnious gossip, or on account of the difficulty of touching upon so delicate a point, he ventured on his first explanation in 1790, and he then did so in a tone which sufficiently reveals his character.² The *Année littéraire* had called La Harpe a *child of chance*. A man of honour, since become illustrious by a moment of great courage, Boissy-d'Anglas, his friend, took up his pen in his defence, and wrote, in the *Mercure de France* of the 20 February 1790, a letter in which he restated, to La Harpe's honour, the facts relating to his birth and early youth that were being misrepresented. But, in a note which he added to his friend's letter, La Harpe, who was on the staff of the *Mercure*, adopted a loftier tone: If he has hitherto preserved silence, he said, it was from contempt:

'But now that people are trying to invalidate the homage which I pay to liberty, and to make out that my hatred of the aristocracy is no more than that feeling of jealousy which is supposed to animate the lower orders, I am forced to declare that as a matter of fact I chance to be of rather good and noble birth, of a family which came originally from Savoy and settled in the Pays de Vaud, and trace their origin in a direct line to the year 1389, when one of my ancestors was Gentleman of the Chamber to Bonne of Bourbon, Countess of Savoy.'

And he continues to expatiate on his noble birth; he speaks of his noble Swiss cousins, one of whom once visited him at Ferney, and the other of whom had come to Paris a few years before to enter French service:

'On my recommendation, says La Harpe, M. the Comte d'Affry (Commander of the Swiss troops) had the goodness to receive him at once among the gentleman-cadets of one of his regiments, and that honourable old man, who knew my family, demanded of my young kinsman no other proof than that of being acknowledged by me as belonging to me. That is what I am by birth. . . .'

Of being acknowledged by me as belonging to me, could a Montmorency have spoken differently? This tone already shows how far La Harpe's self-esteem can easily go when he is exalted and angered by contradiction. At this moment he quite forgot his sister the glazier's wife, whose marriage deed (31 March 1761) he took good care not to sign. A few years later, however, La Harpe, converted and still preserving many of his faults, did with respect to his birth at least an act of humility which is to his credit. In a prayer or Elevation to God he exclaims: 'To whom hast thou done more good than to me, O my God? To whom hast thou given more tokens of a fatherly goodness? Who took care of me when my father and mother were taken from me? . . . Poor and an orphan, I was nourished with the bread of thy charity.' And he adds this note lest it might be forgotten: 'At nine years of age the author was supported for six months by the Sisters of Charity of the parish of Saint-André-des-Arcs, and it is known that, until the age of nineteen, he was brought up and supported by charity.'

I have dwelt on this first point as being of some importance and because, after investigating the question, we may infer from it the spite and malice of La Harpe's enemies, his easily exalted vanity, and also his fundamental generosity and sincerity, 'a fit foundation to bear repentance,' as Chateaubriand said very truly.

Admitted to the Collège d'Harcourt with a bursary, thanks to the kindness of the principal, M. Asselin, La Harpe had a brilliant school career; those of his Latin speeches which gained the prize of honour in two successive years have been preserved. His enemies accused him of having retained all his life some of the overweening of an *Emperor of Rhetoric*. Shortly after he left school the young ex-scholar was accused of an odious action which was often brought up against him: he had the unwisdom to write, in conjunction with some of his comrades, satirical lines against divers members of the Collège

d'Harcourt ; but *neither against his masters nor his benefactors*, we are assured by Boissy-d'Anglas : ' This jest was the work of several youths, and M. de La Harpe alone was punished because he was poor, without support, without position, without a protector, and because he had the courage not to reveal the names of his companions.' This account, which appears probable, reduces the youthful peccadillo to its correct proportions. But what are we to think of the discipline which condemned the poor youth to be confined for this fault first at Bicêtre, then, by special favour, at Fort-l'Évêque, where he remained several months ? It was in prison that he wrote a certain *Epistle to Zélis*, which is supposed to be the first, in point of time, of his poetical compositions ; it ends with an invocation to the night to remedy his ills and send him a comforting dream :

O Zélis, tu ne m'entends pas,
Mais j'oublierai mon infortune
En la pleurant entre tes bras !

La Harpe was gallant, and his successes almost equalled his pretensions. Small and even diminutive, in stature, ' tall as Ragotin,' as Voltaire said, his enemies called him *Bébé*, which was the nickname of a dwarf of King Stanislas (I omit the other nicknames, *Harpula*, *Psaltérion*, *Cithara*, which are only translations or disguises of his own name). Madame Suard, who at one time looked upon him with favour, said of him : ' He had a fine head and an amiable expression ; but he was small of stature and without elegance.' A certain deformity of the shoulder seemed to point to a vague intention on the part of nature to carry the irregularity still farther ; but this original intention was arrested in time. There was in his whole personality an inflexibility, an audacity, an air of decision and confidence which always lacked something to give it a full and real authority.

De La Harpe, a-t-on dit, l'impertinent visag
Appelle le soufflet. . . .

The lines are by Le Brun, the idea was Piron's. Society could smile on seeing him appear with the air of a conqueror, ' well powdered, in his black coat of velvet, his gold-embroidered vest and his embroidered ruffles,' in

his double coquetry as a gallant and a *bel-esprit*, as he appeared in short when he went to give one of his hundred readings of his play *Mélanie*, which made him quite the rage. The pains and the misadventures he sometimes suffered on the way (and he suffered many in his life) were the joy and delight of the slanderers, especially his confrères the men of letters who were less favoured by fortune. His favour often suffered relapses and even total eclipses. He had his days of revolt, even before he became a power. But when, later, in his professorial chair at the Lycée, after finding his true place and function, he read with expression, with fire, his generally elegant and judicious lectures, people perceived with astonishment that he was a master, they acknowledged and applauded him without any effort, without any revolt. In his best days, during the first years of this quite novel branch of teaching, and before it was spoiled by the introduction of political declamation, he exercised a powerful influence and even a charm upon his audience. This La Harpe of the Lycée in the years 1786-87-88, and the real services he rendered at the time to literary reason and public culture, should be ever present in the minds of those who judge him, and arrest the pleasantries which it is too easy to repeat when he is in question.

At first he tried many things and made many mistakes before attaining to the full exercise of his real vocation. Intended by nature for a critic and a professor of literature, he aspired to be a poet. It was the time when the *heroïd* or heroic epistle came into vogue; Colardeau had set the fashion by his *Épître d'Héloïse à Abélard*. La Harpe made his debut then with heroïds (1759); but he prefaced his with a few pages headed *Essai sur l'Héroïde*, in which, speaking of his predecessors, he said of Fontenelle: 'M. de Fontenelle, estimable no doubt in many respects, attempted almost every kind of poetry because he was born for none.' This judgment, and the form in which it was expressed, outweighed all the verses which followed.

The heroïd was for La Harpe only a step to reach tragedy. His first work of this kind was a success. *Warwick*, performed in November 1763, had a sort of triumph which the author never again enjoyed. La Harpe was only twenty-four years of age. When the play was published,

it was prefaced by a Letter to Voltaire, in which he discoursed and disputed even about that art which they possessed in common, and he did so in the tone of an already ripe pupil and almost a master, which caused much offence at the time, but which only confirms La Harpe's precocious critical inclinations. Voltaire replied with eulogies. He said, and I know not whether he thought, that the young author 'had taken an eagle's flight in *Warwick*.' It was just this flight and these wings that were wanting in La Harpe. He rides his Pegasus *at a walking pace*, as Le Brun said; *he crawls artistically in his timid lines*. The fire he had in himself was never communicated to his poetry. In his Letter to Voltaire, La Harpe complained of having enemies: 'It is both sad and inconceivable, he said, to be hated by a crowd of people one has never seen.' To which Voltaire replied: 'There have always been Frérons in literature; but somebody has said that there must be caterpillars for the nightingales to eat to improve their singing.' It was a singular recipe. La Harpe followed it too frequently; he had too frequent dealings with the caterpillars of literature, and he did not become any more of a nightingale, nor any more of a poet.

To accuse Fréron at this date was moreover not quite just. The notice of *Warwick* which appeared in the *Année littéraire* was chiefly composed of two letters addressed to the editor, one by Dorat and the other by an anonymous writer, and we cannot say that La Harpe did not receive a very adequate share of praise. On La Harpe's assumption that he was hated by a crowd of people one of the two writers made this rather witty remark:

'A young dandy boasts, in order to appear fashionable, that he is loved by many women; young poets have the same vanity, they imagine that they have numerous enemies. It may be a mortification to M. de La Harpe's vanity, but I may assure him that he has no enemies; I require no other proof than the success of his tragedy.'

La Harpe had not the good wit not to take offence at moderate criticisms, nor the good sense to close his eyes to the insults and the meanness that envy opposes to every success, to every budding celebrity; and his life from that time was divided into two parts which were continually intermingling, and in the confusion of which

his dignity as a man and a writer received cruel and irreparable wounds. He entered upon a war or rather a thousand little wars with all the vanities of the authors of the day, posing as their judge and their scourge ; at the same time he aspired to the honour of being a restorer of good taste and a model in his poetic works and productions. And to this he was quite unequal.

As a poet La Harpe hardly deserves to be followed or studied. In his time he enjoyed some merited successes or half-successes. The enlightened minds of the time however, Grimm, Diderot, and others that were sharpened by rivalry and the practice of the art, such as Le Brun, very clearly discerned his weak sides, so commonplace in their vapid elegance, and denounced in detail his defects, which the march of time has to-day blended into a single one, leadly dullness and insipidity. I say this of all La Harpe's works in verse, whether they are called *Warwick* or *Mélanie*, whether, like his *Philoctète*, they are intended to be written in a more severe taste, but in which the true classic simplicity is wanting ; or whether the author assumes a more airy tone and aims at gracefulness, in poems like *Tangu et Félimé*, a kind of poetry in which Voltaire is, in France, the only master, and the only tolerable one ; for he alone is readable. M. Daunou, who has written an excellent piece of criticism on La Harpe, but from the strictly classical point of view, confines himself to quoting, as a masterpiece of the lyric kind, a little song very familiar to our mothers : *O ma tendre musette !* and even here he appears to me to venture a little too far.

Voltaire had written an Epistle to Horace, the last delightful lines of which are universally known ; La Harpe wrote *Horace's Reply* ; but, though speaking in the name of the amiable Roman poet, he thinks too much of Linguet, Maupertuis, Fréron, all the bores of the day : his ideas do not rise above the literary trade and literary squabbles, and there is no ray of light as there is at the end of Voltaire's poem.

It is as a journalist that, at the outset, La Harpe appears most noteworthy, and with a verve of his own which shows less in his style than in his subsequent conduct and his zeal. His taste is neither very uncommon nor very accurate, nor even delicate ; but, in the order of his ideas it is pure, sound and judicious ; it is quick and unhesitating.

Such La Harpe appears to me in the majority of the articles in the *Mercure*, which drew upon him so many reprisals and rancours; such he appears in the *Correspondance avec le Grand-Duc de Russie*, where he gives himself a free rein in the matter of decisive judgment. Whoever wishes in his turn to study this rather conventional and circumscribed class of literature of the eighteenth century, and to form his opinions about it in its details and proportions, cannot do better than listen to La Harpe: I have profited by him a thousand times. We must not forget that a great part of his criticism has lost its originality; and we must always remember the personality of the Aristarchus who delivered these commentaries, his vehemence of gesture and tone, the smartness (and even offensiveness) with which he turned upon his friends, his comrades of the day before, as soon as he thought that good taste was concerned. To us his articles appear rather cold; but his offended victims called them satires full of gall, and if he was reproved for them, as he was one day by the honest Dorat, he would reply artlessly: '*I cannot help it, the temptation is too strong.*' There we have the critic, the man to whom Voltaire had no need to cry *Macte animo*, as he did so often, the man about whom he was wrong when he said that '*his courage was equal to his genius*;' equal, and even superior to his taste, that is what he should have said. La Harpe, like all true critics who are destined to exert influence in their time, such as Malherbe, Boileau, Samuel Johnson, had the courage of his opinions, nay he had the intrepidity and the unwise temerity of his opinions, in face of the crowd of offended second-rate authors. Chabanon describes him as quite a young man, twenty-seven years of age, installed at Voltaire's house at Ferney, where he spent a whole year (La Harpe was there with his wife, a rather pretty woman, the daughter of a coffee-house keeper, who wrote poetry herself and could act in comedy). Well! La Harpe at Ferney, quite a young man, criticised Voltaire, picked out the weak lines in the plays in which he took a part, corrected them sometimes without giving him warning. Voltaire submitted as a rule, and would shout from his place when he observed the change: '*The little fellow is right; it is better like that.*' Such he was with Voltaire

at Ferney in his younger days, such he was with Chateaubriand at the end of his career, when he said to the author of the *Génie du Christianisme*: 'Shut yourself up with me for a few mornings, and we will remove all these defects which make them cry out, leaving only the beauties that offend them.' I wish to emphasise that essentially critical nature in La Harpe which, in spite of all his errors, is his title to respect; by reason of which Voltaire was once capable of calling him 'a young man full of virtue' (what the Latins would have called *animosus infans*), by reason of which Chateaubriand defined him, 'taking him all in all, a man of a just, impartial, enlightened mind in spite of his passions, capable of perceiving talent and admiring it, of weeping at beautiful poetry or a beautiful action.' I am pleased to quote these words of acknowledgment, and to oppose them to so many other scornful and slanderous accounts of him, because, in spite of many faults and many passionate outbursts which lent a handle to ridicule, La Harpe appears to me a generous soul at bottom, and because no man has been more cruelly exposed to the ferocity of others' vanities, which his own, by the way, treated with so little consideration.

The year 1778 was the most painful of his literary life, and we must say something about the trials and tribulations he had to bear. Voltaire had just died at Paris (30 May), and the crowd of second-rate authors, enemies of La Harpe, were only awaiting an occasion to fall upon the disciple who was no longer covered by the master's protection. La Harpe exercised his profession as a critic in the *Mercure*, and at the same time he laboriously pursued his dramatic career. His tragedy *Les Barmécides* was on the eve of being performed at the Théâtre-Français. In order to avoid indecent quarrels, the Government had desired the newspapers to preserve silence on the subject of Voltaire, when, about five weeks after his death, La Harpe, in a notice which he wrote for the *Mercure* (5 July 1778) of the last plays performed by the Comédie-Française, *Tancrède* and *Bajazet*, ventured on a few observations on the latter tragedy, which, he said, was generally regarded as one of Racine's weakest. He pointed out its faults and its beauties at the same time and remarked that Voltaire, who had tried his hand at a very similar subject in *Zulime*, was a long way behind

Racine : ' We see, therefore, he concluded, that it is a terrible undertaking to remake a play of Racine, even when Racine has not been at his best.'

That La Harpe, bound as he was to Voltaire by the ties of an almost filial gratitude ; to whom Voltaire wrote : ' My fatherly entrails are moved by tenderness at each of your successes ' ; that La Harpe might have chosen another moment and another circumstance to speak of Voltaire during this truce of silence which had been observed since his death, may be easily admitted : but after reading the judicious and harmless article itself in the *Mercur*, we are at pains to understand the factitious anger and indignation that he excited in the midst of the Voltairian coterie. A fraternity of monks, disturbed in the work of canonising their saint, could not have been more exasperated and more intolerant. Condorcet (for it appears to have been he), with that deliberate acrimony which was one of his talents, published in the *Journal de Paris* a letter, signed by the Marquis de Villeveille, in which the article was denounced to the vengeance of brothers and friends. The publication of this letter, on the 10 July, fell just on the eve of the first performance of the *Barmécides* which took place on the next day. The disturbing effect of such a sensation on La Harpe's irritable soul may be conceived. He only had time to write a first letter, which betrays his violent emotion ; he excuses, he justifies himself ; he spoke of Voltaire, he says, as he might have spoken of a classic, of an Ancient ; he spoke of *Zulime* as he might have spoken of the *Othon* of Corneille, without any intention of depreciating the poet's genius. He was a thousand times right, except in the small matter of propriety perhaps, and opportuneness, on which he was the first to utter his *Mea culpa* with a good grace. It was evident that, in this case as in many others, the instinct of the critic, of the man who conceives a just idea and cannot help saying it, had overcome in him every secondary consideration.

This quarrel, of which I only indicate the occasion and the pretext, did not end so soon ; it had numberless consequences and recoils. La Harpe was obliged to give up the chief editorship of the *Mercur* ; he had incurred blame and ridicule by praising his own tragedy *Les Barmécides*. It was his custom to praise his own works.

The passion into which this quarrel threw him, unjust as it was at the beginning, involved him in a series of disputes and unworthy bickerings, in which he committed himself more and more. He was thirty-nine years of age at the time. Those who have been accustomed since their childhood to hear La Harpe spoken of as an oracle, a dictator of good taste, a *French Quintilian*, will be astonished to see to what a degree of discredit he had fallen at this time. He verified the smart saying of the Abbé de Bois-mont, his confrère in the Academy: 'We are all infinitely fond of our colleague M. de La Harpe, but it really pains us to see him always appearing with a torn ear.' The Abbé Maury wrote in this same year (9 December 1778), in a letter to Dureau de La Malle, the following passage on La Harpe; it says more than all our reflections; it would be impossible to describe more expressively the disrepute into which he had fallen at this moment, and the public injustice that was excited by a merely imprudent act, but to which he almost succumbed.

'It is not true, writes the Abbé Maury, that La Harpe has been removed from the staff of the *Mercur*; he is no longer burdened with the editorship of that paper, and his honorarium has been reduced to a thousand crowns, his work being limited to a literary article and the dramatic criticism. One of his friends was recently arrested on a warrant of the Consuls (the Tribunal of Commerce). He was being led to prison, and he requested the men of the Watch to accompany him to the house of M. de La Harpe, his friend, who would bail him out and perhaps pay the two thousand francs which had been the occasion of this warrant of arrest. He came indeed at nine o'clock in the morning, and La Harpe saw himself surrounded by twenty *baillif's officers* (*recors*¹) who guarded all the approaches to his house. They sent to the creditor, who came to receive his two hundred pistoles; but the scene lasted for more than two hours, and a kind soul who was passing by the Rue Saint-Honoré spread the report that La Harpe had been beating his wife, and that a squad of the Watch, headed by the Commissaire of the ward, had restored peace in the household. This calumny was printed and accepted by all Paris with the interest that is being taken in the poor devil who is the subject of it. Never was a good action more cruelly punished. His expulsion from the Academy, his journey to London, etc., have no better foundation. I must admit, however, that La Harpe's letter, published in the *Courrier de l'Europe* of the 27 October (a letter of abuse in reply to other abuses), has put him irreparably in the wrong, and

¹ Those who will take the trouble to read this letter in the original at the National Library, will here find another word (*pousse-c . . .*), for which I have substituted an equivalent. The Abbé Maury, both in his conversation and his familiar letters, was not afraid of using coarse expressions.

done him much more harm than all the libels by which he is assailed. It is an inexcusable piece of folly, but he will consult nobody, and if he writes a single line against his enemies he is hopelessly lost. The exasperation of the public is such that they will not allow La Harpe to be right on any point. I have told him so with all the courage and perhaps all the brutality of friendship: they will flout him, they will spit in his face, they will drive him out of the Academy and from Paris, if he does not absolutely give up the pugilistic attitude which has served him so ill. I can see that at present he has only one enemy, that is the public *en masse*, who are united on this point alone, and who will neither listen to his apologies nor read his works.'

La Harpe, as we see, had a long way to retrace; he was able to retrace it, and it needed all his intellectual energy and all his courage. Seven years are past: we are at the Lycée which has just been opened in 1786, at the corner of the Rue Saint-Honoré and the Rue de Valois, at the spot where to-day stands (O vicissitude of human things!) the *Estaminet des Nations*. The Lycée was at that time both a scientific and literary institution, an elegant Sorbonne for the use of the world of society. La Harpe mounts his desk about two o'clock in the afternoon. The élite of young ladies, of men of wit and *littérateurs*, all that is most brilliant in this flourishing epoch of Louis XVI, surround his chair. He takes his seat with calm assurance and dignity. By his attitude, by the excellent delivery of his lecture, as well as by the quality of his speech, he indeed justifies these words of Voltaire: 'You were always made for the noble and the elegant, that is your character.' Here we have a La Harpe who is still a critic, but no longer a controversialist, a professor and no more a journalist. For the first time in France, instruction of an altogether literary nature begins and endeavours to be pleasing; for the first time, those who are neither frivolous nor learned, who seek a judicious and average culture, see unrolled before their eyes easy frames which widen and rest the mental sight, even when the professor has not quite succeeded in filling them. Anti-quity no doubt he hastens over, he only touches upon; for a man so well informed and whose profession it is to be so, he shows a singular ignorance and forgetfulness; his ignorance is equally great and striking in our eyes on the intermediate periods which he passes over rapidly, on which his audiences, moreover, expected nothing more than outline sketches, which were then considered adequate. But as he approaches the best epochs of French

literature, his judgments become firm and decided ; the seventeenth century, in some of its portions and its works, has never been better analysed. No one ever spoke better of Racine's tragedy, and from Racine's point of view. Let us understand one another : do not expect of La Harpe any of those superior views which step outside of certain habits and limits of thought, and which presuppose new and extended comparisons. Minds and talents have their regions : that of La Harpe was the middle region of the cultivated intellects of his time ; and it is because he kept himself and gathered all his forces within it, that he exercised so useful an action and so real an influence around him. From this time it was not very uncommon to meet with free and bold talkers who, speaking of La Harpe apropos of his *Eulogy of Racine*, said : ' M. de La Harpe's *Eulogy* lacks ideas and views. . . . A new and deep glance on tragedy and the dramatic art, that was needed to do honour to the ashes of the great Racine.'¹ Such views, such questions, extending to Sophocles and Shakespeare, might have been conceived at the time by a few minds ; they would have exceeded the horizon of an audience at that date, and during the thirty or thirty-five following years. But, in his *Cours de Littérature*, taking up Racine's plays one by one, La Harpe develops some happy resources of analysis, and he educates his audiences. The ancient French tragedy (I say *ancient*, because it no longer exists) had its rules, its artifices, its proprieties, which Racine especially knew and carried to perfection, and of which he became the accomplished exemplar. Next to Voltaire, La Harpe understood and felt them better than anybody, and he is the best guide indeed, as soon as we try to enter into the economy itself and into each part of this class of pathetic and learned composition. Nowadays, even when we see *Phèdre*, we are hardly sensible to anything but the three or four great scenes and the admirable style ; but the order of the piece, the succession of intermediary scenes, their arrangement and a crowd of details no longer appeal to us ; we no longer completely enter into them. We know too well the effect of this arrangement, when it is no longer in the hands of Racine : that illusion

¹ Grimm's *Correspondence*.

is destroyed like so many others. Admiration for Racine still exists and always will exist ; but the religious feeling for Racine's class of work is attained, and more than attained. It was undiminished in La Harpe's time, and no one contributed more than he to environ it with just and lucid reasons.

On other subjects near to Racine, he is incomplete ; he has little appreciation of Molière, and does not take as much account of high comedy as it deserves. On Bossuet, on Bourdaloue, on La Rochefoucauld and de Retz, we have gone ahead of him : his impressions and ideas of them are such as might suggest themselves, after a first cursory reading, to a facile, fluent, and eloquent mind. No matter ; it is well to have this first impression, though others have since gone more deeply into the subject ; it is well to follow his guidance, to accept and feel this first judgment, which is situated, if I may say so, in the very centre of French tradition ; it is well in a word to have passed through La Harpe, even though for a moment only.

La Harpe is not a careful and studiously investigating critic, he is a mere professor, lucid and animated. He extends, he develops and applies Voltaire's principles of taste ; and though he has not Voltaire's sudden and piquant ideas, he has something of his clear, easy and natural charm. His expressions and ideas represent his first impressions and those which are intelligible to the minds of all. He has the facile elegance that may be taught to a certain extent ; not the delicate and supreme elegance. He was eminently qualified to impart to the mind a first and general tincture.

Such is my impression of the good and sound portions of the *Cours de Littérature*. This Course suffered a serious accident, it was cut in two by the French Revolution. It was extremely disturbed by it (like many other things), and this disturbance shows itself in flagrant contradictions. We cannot be surprised at it, and it behoves those who live in more tranquil times, but have not themselves been able to escape a few literary contradictions and retractions, to be a little indulgent to La Harpe's shortcomings in that respect.

In the *Cours de Littérature*, it was the eighteenth century that above all was the stage and the arena of La Harpe's struggles and combats, when he one day

became converted and turned round upon himself. He had been very advanced in his ideas on the Revolution ; it was not until '93, and when he was personally warned by violence and thrown into prison, that he came to a stop. The scales then fell from his eyes, and the universal violence then appeared to him in all its hateful and criminal aspects. The religious idea also illumined him at this moment like a flash : he fell on his knees and wept. This sudden conversion of La Harpe, and the consideration of how much of the old Adam still remained, and what modifications it worked within him, deserves a special moral study. Never did a convert put less apparent constraint upon himself, his disposition and humours, even his sensualities (at least in respect of good cheer). But his animosities, above all, seemed to have only changed their object and direction, and become more aggravated. When he left the prison at the age of fifty-five, he was more ardent, more inflamed than ever, incandescent as a young man, or perhaps already as an old one. His brain had evidently lost its perfect health and balance ; he had received a shock. His vanity was continually in a state of over-excitement, and was blended with singular effusions of humility. On the 31 December 1794 he again mounted his desk at the Lycée, declaring a courageous war against the hardly subdued and still menacing *tyrants of reason, of morality, of letters and arts* ; he inveighed against the revolutionary language in a language which was in its turn slightly influenced by it. He forgot that he himself, La Harpe, had appeared in that very chair, about two years previously, in the red cap of liberty. That war which he had declared against the political oppressors of the old order, he continued with the same vigour in the literary order against the propagators of philosophical ideas, whom he had come to consider as the prime authors of the mischief. In spite of declamatory excesses, which savour of reaction, this second half of the *Cours de Littérature* offers some bits that are full of verve and a warm sincerity, as well as some portions of good criticism.

La Harpe's sin lies not in the fact of his having changed, but in the fact that he expresses himself in his new frame of mind with the same blind and despotic confidence, nay with much more assurance than he had

shown in his first form of thought. He only persisted more and more and every day became strengthened in his natural disposition to impose upon himself and others, when he spoke, an invariable conviction. It seemed as if experience had not taught him 'that what has appeared to us to be true at one time, may seem wrong at another.'¹ He continued to live for some years in this state of honourable, but rather unhealthy exaltation, which is reflected in his last writings, and died on the 11 February 1803, at the age of sixty-four only.

With all his faults and all his natural imperfections, giving a dying hand to Chateaubriand, to Fontanes, to the whole of that young literary group who had the future in their hands, he handed on the living torch of tradition, and he verified Voltaire's first prognostic: 'Whatever may happen, I regard you as the restorer of Belles-lettres.' That is a magnificent word, but it is just after all (if we consider his rôle and influence as a whole), and should be engraved on his tomb.

I will say here, as I did in the case of the Cardinal de Retz: this is only a sketch and a first article, and it needs a second to settle many particulars and to develop my judgments.

¹ Volney, in his *Reply to Dr. Priestley*.

LA HARPE—ANECDOTES

Monday, 17 November 1851.

THERE is so much to say about La Harpe, that I must needs return to him. I have merely touched upon La Harpe the convert ; but, before considering him from this point of view, I must ask leave to recall to the generations that have forgotten them, or have never perhaps known them, some of the anecdotes which circulated in the literary world fifty years ago, and some of which will not fail to please.

Every man of letters properly speaking, if he has been celebrated and has exercised an influence on his time, if he has been a *centre* to any degree, excites more curiosity and gives rise to more gossip and interest of different kinds than he often deserves. On those who have written much, especially if they have criticised other writers, much is written. The pen calls for the pen, and interested vanities are given to much babbling. On Malherbe, on Boileau, on Pope, on Johnson, not content with judging them by their works, men have written books, they have gathered their most insignificant sayings, they have studied and pursued them even in the details of their domestic life. La Harpe, who is not by a long way in the foremost rank of this group of critic-poets, but who belongs to it in a certain degree, has shared this honour and this disadvantage. From the very beginning of his career, though he seemed to aspire mainly to the fame of the tragic poet, there was something about him which revealed the critic and the arbiter, and which excluded the idea of comradeship : that was unpleasant, and, even before he assumed the sceptre or the ferule in the *Mercure* and elsewhere, he was treated without any indulgence, and almost as a common enemy.

There sprang up at once quite a series of anecdotes and, as it were, a cycle of legends about his early years. People went so far as to say that on the day of his christening, and during the ceremony, he announced his irascible character by his cries, and foreshadowed his future liking for literary squabbles. On the eve of his debut on the stage, when his tragedy *Warwick* was about to be performed (November 1763), he already had, thanks to his good friends the authors, a frightful reputation; they would tell, with exaggerations, the story of the satire he composed on leaving college: 'This little enormity, says Collé in his *Journal*, has been confirmed to me by two or three persons, and I have never known anybody to contradict or deny the fact.' When this tragedy of *Warwick*, which had been quite a success in spite of all, was revived in January 1765, the enemies arranged matters so well, that the fifth act was *hooted*: 'I have never in all my life, says this same Collé, seen such a rebuff happen to a revival; it is ordinarily the other way, the applause increases instead of diminishing. M. de La Harpe must have a particular secret for making more enemies than other men.' When he published his second tragedy, *Timoléon*, La Harpe felt obliged to preface it by an explicit justification of the college satire which was imputed to him as a crime, and he added a few sensible reflections which give us a very good picture of the moment when it appeared:

'It is the prevailing fashion to-day, he said, to be witty. . . . Whilst there is a small number of writers who reflect honour and brilliancy on the nation, there is a much larger number of obscure writers, possessed with the mania of being authors, without any qualifications and without any study, who have formed a sort of league to be avenged upon the oblivious public, and upon the real men of letters who know them not. They have agreed to regard each other as geniuses, and through frequent repetition they have come to believe it. They have decided that *honesty of soul* consists in praising whatever is not praiseworthy, in applauding with all their strength when others are bored. They have decided that the man who has the audacity not to be as enamoured with their works as they are themselves, is a man of a *frightful character, without amenity, without moderation, without respect for the laws of society*: in a word, *without honesty*; that is the term.'

Observation and expression could not be better. Only it is unfortunate that this just severity against the second-rate literature of the day should appear at the end of a tragedy that had been, and deserved to be,

hissed, and not at the head of an excellent satire in the manner of Despréaux. When a man aims at playing the part of a Despréaux, he should not confound it with that of a Pradon. La Harpe had not the firmness and power of taste to be sensible of it, or to limit his questionable pretensions, and confine himself to his only and true vocation.

This tragedy of *Timoléon* was, from the very first day (1 August 1764), 'heard, judged and condemned by the public with great tranquillity,' with the exception of two or three applauded passages. Before the second performance the play was stopped owing to Le Kain's indisposition; the public were greatly amused when they heard that the indisposition was the result of a sprain he received in the *Rue de La Harpe*. Our author's life or his legendary cycle, embroidered by his enemies, is full of this kind of appropriateness and embellishments.

Another untimely piece of ill-luck for La Harpe, who was poor and, according to Collé, 'one of the least well-off of authors,' was his marriage about the time of the production of *Timoléon*. 'He has just married, says Grimm, the daughter of a coffee-house keeper, and a poetess. A poor tragedy and a marriage, that makes two follies one after another.'

In taking this unwise step, La Harpe however testified to his probity and generosity. The *demoiselle* Marie-Marthe Monmayeux, daughter of a coffee-house keeper in the *Rue des Quatre-Vents*, in whose house he lodged, was enceinte by him, and he does not appear to have made her any promises. He did his duty, however, like a gentleman, and married at twenty-five (22 November 1764), neither he nor she having any fortune. This marriage of love and poetry was by the way one of the least happy. They had two children who did not survive. When, at the time of the Revolution, thirty years after, dissolution of the marriage became possible, La Harpe sued for a divorce on the plea of incompatibility of temper, and obtained it on the 29 March 1793. Within two years after Madame Monmayeux died at Saint-Germain-en-Laye (11 November 1794), and it was publicly rumoured that she had killed herself. La Harpe was not satisfied with that first trial; he married again at the age of fifty-eight (9 August 1797) a young and pretty woman of twenty-

three ; but this time it was the young woman who sued for a divorce, and withdrew after three weeks of conjugal trial or, as it was said, of resistance.

To come back to the young La Harpe, newly married and often enough hissed, it may be imagined that this uneven and necessitous existence was not of a nature to inspire consideration or respect. Dependent on the world, on the salons and even the publishers, he would have needed a great art, a spirit of adroitness and conciliation to raise himself insensibly to the degree of authority to which he aspired, and he had nothing to recommend him but great harshness and austerity of character :

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer,

somebody said of him as of Achilles. A very real drawback to the part he aimed at was his small stature. Physical qualities have a much greater influence from the moral point of view than is imagined. That is the way with humanity : a tone that is easily overlooked in a tall man, cannot be equally pardoned in a small one. Pope could have told a tale about it in his day. So with La Harpe. The authors he criticised (and I am ashamed of them) very often had recourse to threats : ' People laugh at a dwarf who stiffens himself to look big, wrote Dorat, and when he becomes a nuisance, a fillip will do for him.' A sorry author of the day, Blin de Sainmore, is even supposed to have come to blows with La Harpe in the street (February 1774). This kind of brutality greatly amused the gallery and was regarded in the light of a Carnival jest.

Our literary manners (though they are not excellent) have become, I am pleased to remark, more seemly and dignified. No doubt the vanity of criticised authors is at bottom the same as it was in the time of Blin de Sainmore. Many a tragic author of five feet six inches might sometimes be tempted to crush a critic who is only five feet high : but he would not dare. The gallery would not laugh as they used to do, and the man of letters, having ceased to be a separate species, has gained in real equality.

More dangerous for La Harpe than the coarse violence of a Blin de Sainmore, were the good poems and epigrams of which he frequently formed the theme, and from which

his memory still suffers to a certain degree. Never, for example, will these lines of Gilbert's *Apologie* be forgotten, in which that spirited poet, who had a future before him, justified himself for calling the masks by their name :

Si j'évoque jamais du fond de son journal
Des sophistes du temps l'adulateur banal ;
Lorsque son nom suffit pour exciter le rire,
Dois-je, au lieu de La Harpe, obscurément écrire :
C'est ce petit rimeur de tant de prix enflé,
Qui sifflé pour ses vers, pour sa prose sifflé,
Tout meurtri des faux pas de sa muse tragique,
Tomba de chute en chute au trône académique !
Ces détours sont d'un lâche et malin détracteur. . . .

Such lines are arrows which the wounded, willy-nilly, carries with him into the future. But of all those who took La Harpe to task, none did so with as much pleasure and vindictive delight as Le Brun. Le Brun was a real poet, of the race of lyrics. A friend and precursor of André Chénier, he was sensible how weak, incomplete and deficient was La Harpe's taste, when he claimed to be a judge of poetry. In an *Epistle Sur la bonne et la mauvaise plaisanterie*, drawing a line of distinction between what is permissible and what is forbidden in pleasantry, he came to choose La Harpe as an example in the following excellent passage, of which I quoted the beginning the other day :

De La Harpe, a-t-on dit, l'impertinent visage
Appelle le soufflet. Ce mot n'est qu'un outrage.
Je veux qu'un trait plus doux, léger, inattendu,
Frappe l'orgueil d'un fat plaisamment confondu.
Dites : Ce froid rimeur se caresse lui-même ;
Au défaut du public, il est juste qu'il s'aime ;
Il s'est signé grand homme, et se dit immortel
Au *Mercury* !—Ces mots n'ont rien qui soit cruel.
Jadis il me louait dans sa prose enfantine ;
Mais, dix fois repoussé du trône de Racine,
Il boude ; et son dépit m'a, dit-on, harcelé.
L'ingrat ! j'étais le seul qui ne l'eût pas sifflé.

Le Brun, in the pride of his solitary consciousness, smiled with pity when he heard somebody say that La Harpe's poetry had something of the 'style of Jean Racine' : but when La Harpe, following Voltaire's example, went so far as to speak lightly of the great Corneille, 'the turgid reasoner,' as he is called in the Ferney Correspondence, oh ! then Le Brun, who was of Malherbe's lineage, was

seized with indignation, and chastised the irreverence in this epigram, one of the finest that I know :

SUR LA HARPE,

Qui venait de parler du grand Corneille avec irrévérence.

Ce petit homme, à son petit compas,
Veut sans pudeur asservir le génie,
Au bas du Pinde il trotte à petits pas,
Et croit franchir les sommets d'Aonie.
Au grand Corneille il a fait avanée ;
Mais, à vrai dire, or riait aux éclats
De voir ce nain mesurer un Atlas,
Et redoublant ses efforts de Pygmée,
Burlesquement roidir ses petits bras
Pour étouffer si l'air e renommée.

Le Brun never more clearly proved the elevation of his talent than by this short *dizain*, and we may say that he carried grandeur even into the epigram.

One recovers from Dorat and the shafts hurled by adversaries of his calibre ; but one remains crushed under blows like these of Le Brun. The great complete critics, Horace, Despréaux, Pope, never suffered such lines to be written outside of their ken or against themselves. If they did not write all the good poetry of their time, they at least favoured, aided and protected it ; above all they never allowed anybody the opportunity or the glory of imagining such cruel and immortal lines against themselves.

There was a day when it was neither Le Brun, nor Gilbert, but the public *en masse* who indulged their sarcasm against La Harpe : that was the very day of his reception at the French Academy (20 June 1776). We have witnessed in our time more than one of these Academic receptions in which the Director was pleased to treat the new member perhaps rather too much like a novice or a patient. In these cases, the public are always a party in the sarcasm ; when once they are disposed to be malicious, they show no pity. This was La Harpe's experience. He succeeded Colardeau : Marmontel, whose duty it was to receive him, naturally pronounced a eulogy on his predecessor. He described Colardeau as resembling his writings, mild, sentimental, modest, pained by criticism and determined never to exercise it against another : '*There, Sir, we see an interesting character in a man of letters !*' These simple words became the signal

for general applause, and, from that moment, the whole of Marmontel's address was taken for a piece of banter, and turned against the newly elected member: 'The man of letters whom you are replacing,—*peaceable,—modest,—indulgent,—*or at least *careful not to make the opinion he had of himself painful to others*—revealed himself by happy talents. . . .' At each of these words of flattery of the defunct, Marmontel was interrupted, and he became malicious in his turn, more malicious no doubt than he had intended to be, and encouraged interruption by emphasising the pauses. La Harpe meanwhile put a good face upon the matter, although he was tempted at one moment, as he confessed afterwards, to rise and apostrophise the public. The scene would then have been complete. As it was, this reception at the Academy was a kind of execution. Such a mishap never happens to the superior guides of public opinion; in decisive circumstances they recover all their allies, and they have the public on their side.

We begin to perceive more and more clearly, it seems to me, that La Harpe, in spite of some estimable and useful qualities, never attained to the heights of his art, and always offered a flank to attack. He was never able, or at least only on rare occasions was he able to seize all the authority of the critic's function, even the transitory and temporary side of it. I come to the singular circumstances which marked his conduct during the Revolution, and which decisively prove that in moral respects too he lacked something, that he wanted a few more inches to reach the stature of those whose courage dominates events and who are not carried away by them.

Duclos terminated his *Histoire de Louis XI* with the words: 'When weighed in the balance, he was a king.' Gaillard, recalling these words, tries to apply them to La Harpe, and says that 'taking him all in all, he was a man.' Certainly, taking him all in all, and especially for his contemporaries, M. de La Harpe was *somebody*, and I think I made that sufficiently clear in my first criticism. Still he was wanting in several of the qualities which are essential to form the character of a man, moderation, balance, a right knowledge when to stop, wise reflection, memory of the past, and the last eleven or twelve years

of his life showed that impossibility of maturing which is the infirmity of some living organisations.

Voltaire, though he lavishes all sorts of praises on his disciple, let slip a terrible word, since it goes to the very bottom of the man in La Harpe: '*He is an oven that always heats and in which nothing is cooked.*' And it is a fact that with La Harpe there was at all times an expenditure of heat that was entirely sterile, and out of proportion with the result.

He was at first carried away by the Revolution; nothing was more natural or even more legitimate and excusable at the beginning. But La Harpe did not stop at the good days or what might have been regarded as the good days: his enthusiasm survived the 10 August, the 2 September, the 21 January. A series of texts have been collected from his articles in the *Mercure*, which go to show that until 1793, and even till the beginning of 1794,¹ his extravagant declamation was equal to anything that anybody could desire at the time. He never ceased to denounce, in phrases worthy of the old and fiery Raynal, 'the superstition, as he says, which *transforms man into a beast*, the fanaticism which *makes him a savage beast*, the despotism which *makes him a beast of burden.*' But once

¹ The *Journal de la Librairie* of Saturday the 14 December 1833 contains the following indication which we owe to M. Ravenel:

'The Catalogue of M. Laya's books comprised, under No. 285, the *Histoire de la Révolution française*, by M. Thiers; this copy was covered with pencil notes, some of which I thought curious; I will quote one concerning La Harpe. It is known that after professing principles of the most exaggerated republicanism, La Harpe became one of its most passionate opponents. His *Cours de Littérature* is full of violent diatribes against the men whose opinions he had long shared. Robespierre especially became the object of his hardest blows: "A Robespierre! he exclaims, a Robespierre! (since I must stoop to this infamous name, which I cannot utter without doing violence as it were to the profound contempt I have always felt for him, and which he was not unaware of) a Robespierre! etc." If we are to believe Laya, and there is no reason to doubt his assertion, La Harpe here plumes himself on a courage which he did not possess. There was found, in fact, among the papers seized at Robespierre's house, a letter, full of fawning expressions, which La Harpe wrote him on the occasion of the speech he delivered, on the 20 Prairial of the year II, in honour of the Supreme Being. This letter does not appear among those which were printed in the Report of Courtois (drawn up by Laya), because that deputy, says the note, *had the weakness to return it to La Harpe.*

This fact, already revealed by M. Garat (*Mémoires historiques sur la Vie de M. Suard*, vol. II, page 339), acquires a new degree of certainty from Laya's testimony.

thrown into prison (April 1794), detained at the Luxembourg. La Harpe, in spite of that austere personality that we know, was more astonished than anybody at having been got at; the idea of death appeared before him, his imagination drew a picture; he felt a prey to a great tumult, and, in this upheaval of his whole being, he felt a revolution working within him: he was struck by lightning, as it were, by what they call the Grace of God, which bowled him over and turned him inside out. This inner revolution, sudden as it may have appeared, had been prepared some weeks beforehand by some companions in captivity; two bishops are mentioned as having contributed towards it, the Bishop of Montauban and the Bishop of Saint-Brieuc, not forgetting 'the fair and interesting widow of Comte Stanislas de Clermont-Tonnerre.' Under these combined influences, La Harpe had begun to read for the first time the holy books, the Psalms, the *Imitation of Jesus Christ*, when he received the decisive inner shock which he has described in these terms:

'I was in my prison, alone in my little chamber and in a state of deep melancholy. For some days I had been reading the Psalms, the Gospel, and a few good books. Their effect was rapid, though gradual. I was already restored to Faith, I saw a new light, but it terrified me and threw me into a state of consternation by showing me a gulf, that of forty years of error. I saw the whole disease and no remedy. No one near me to offer me the succour of Religion. On the one side my life lay before my eyes, as I saw it by the torchlight of the heavenly truth, and on the other side death, that death which I awaited every day, the death which so many were then suffering. The priest no longer appeared on the scaffold to comfort the dying: he only ascended it to meet his own death. Full of these afflicting thoughts, my heart was cast down, and addressed itself secretly to God, whom I had just found, and whom I hardly knew as yet. I said to him: What must I do? What is to become of me? I had the *Imitation* on my table, and I had been told that in that excellent book I should often find the answer to my thoughts. I open it at random, and my eyes light on these words: *Behold me, my Son! I come to you because you have called upon me.* I read no more; the sudden impression I felt is beyond all expression, and it is as impossible to describe it as to forget it. I fell with my face to the ground, bathed in tears, choked with sobs, uttering cries and broken words. I felt my heart swelled and relieved, but at the same time as if ready to crack. Assailed by a throng of ideas and feelings, I wept for a long time, though I have no recollection of this situation, except that, without any comparison, it was the most violent and blissful sensation that my heart had ever felt, and these words, *Behold me, my Son!* never ceased to re-echo in my soul, and to powerfully stir all my faculties.'

Whatever we may think of this singular kind of emotion that La Harpe here confesses, and which recalls many

other analogous examples in the spiritual order, we cannot suspect its sincerity, and it is a pity that his subsequent conduct did not better correspond to a revolution of the heart described in so touching a manner. But, instead of coming to the conclusion that after being so forcibly mistaken he could not do better than repent and hold his peace, La Harpe never even dreamed of imposing upon himself this mortification of silence, the most painful of all for one's self-esteem, and we see him, on leaving his prison, rushing with more fervour than ever into every fray; his ardour had only changed its watchword and banner. He engaged in a fresh controversy with Marie-Joseph Chénier, the mouthpiece of the Convention; he made war upon the Convention itself. On the eve of the 13 Vendémiaire, he had the honour of being mentioned in the *Memoirs of Napoleon* at the head of the most virulent orators who occupied the tribunes of the forty-eight Paris Sections and stirred up the Royalist insurrection. We see him multiplying his energies in these stormy years, recovering at the Lycée, at the Normal Schools to which he had been appointed professor, some of his facile and lucid literary inspirations, and at the same time spreading himself and becoming more and more exalted in newspaper politics. The 18 Fructidor, which struck him and obliged him to hide in the country, restored him for a time to a state of calm and a better mental and physical health. When La Harpe was in Paris he could not resist the society which took him up again, and, as he had little self-control, he yielded to his inclinations, to his weakness for the pleasures of the table, ever ready afterwards to repent of his relapses. We can imagine his enemies chuckling over these inconsistencies. Colnet, in a witty and humorous little volume he wrote on La Harpe's falls and relapses (*Correspondance turque*), describes him at table, in the very act of indulging his gluttony, then repenting of it and immediately relapsing. It is quite a little comedy scene very well conducted. La Harpe is represented as seated at the table of a rich banker, shortly before the dessert; he is in that happy disposition of the heart and the stomach which makes a man indulgent: the repast had lacked none of the things that he loved; he was reconciled with his fellow-man; he was ready to find wit in Saint-Ange, judgment in Mercier,

decency in Rétif, mildness of disposition in Blin de Sainmore ; in short, he was ready to admit talent in others besides himself, when suddenly he rose from the table and disappeared :

'After rather a long absence, the mistress of the house sent somebody to look for him : he could not be found. Surprised, uneasy, she leaves the table, goes all over the house in the fear of some accident having happened to him (he was very subject to accidents) ; at last she finds M. de La Harpe in a little retired chamber, on his knees before a pier-table on which two candles were burning. Astonished at this attitude of profound grief, she asked the cause of it ; through a thousand sobs the holy man said :

"Madame, how could I help not being broken-hearted ? How could I help groaning when I think of the excellent dinner that I have had the misfortune to eat ? I have partaken of a rich soup, two cutlets fried in bread-crumbs and done to a turn, the eye and chaps of a beautifully white calf's head, a piece from the side and gills of that pike to which you helped me with your own hands : I declined nothing, because the will of God and of pretty women must be done ; I did honour to three courses : in a word, I have dined, unworthy creature that I am, as well as a bishop, and now I cannot help thinking (*with more tears*) of the cruel privations that are suffered by so many poor priests without any tithes, so many canons without a living, who have not perhaps even an *omelette au lard*, and who will dine badly from now to eternity, if Providence does not come to their aid. (*Madame prepares to go.*)

"But no doubt they are waiting for you at dessert : alas ! *mon Dieu !* I wager that the dessert is superb ; for you are so kind, so careful—an Angel of comfort in this vale of tears ! Must I then go and still eat some *compote*, some marchpane, some fruit : and I know not what ? must I go and drink of those unfortunate wines (and yours are of the best vintages), while those poor priests . . . —But the Lord will not forsake his people.—You will force me perhaps to take coffee (and no doubt it is Mocha) : I hope at least it will be served nice and hot. . . . The poor men, if they knew how I share their miseries ! . . . But, I entreat you, only a thimbleful of liqueur (I know you have the West Indian). . . . I pray God to give them every day the same patience he grants to me : it has become a very rare quality to support so many tribulations. . . . A little *crème des Barbades*, if you don't mind. . . . I know some very worthy priests. . . . —But the life of a Christian is nothing but tribulation, and I must not murmur against the will of Heaven : I will follow you."

It is a good scene ; overcharged, but what does it matter ? it is pure comedy. I will say of it what I have said of Gilbert's and Le Brun's lines against La Harpe : it is unfortunate that he should have lent a handle to it, since no great critic or judicious mind of the first rank will order his life in such a way as to have the scoffers, the men of wit, against him.

When it was known that La Harpe, divorced and a widower, had entered into a second marriage on the 9 August 1797 with a young and pretty woman (*Maiselle de Hatte-Longuerue*), and almost immediately

after that the young wife was suing for a divorce on the ground that she was deceived by her mother in the choice of a husband, I leave the reader to imagine whether the scoffers thought themselves beaten. La Harpe, by the way, took this second conjugal check and this affront in all humility. I have before me a letter which he wrote to Madame Récamier, who, with her good grace at all times, had tried to be a mediator :

' You know better than anybody, wrote La Harpe to her, how pure were my intentions in this unhappy business, although my conduct was not wise. My confidence was blind, and has been shamefully abused. I have been deceived in every way by her whose good I only desired, and God has used her to punish me for the ill I have done to others. His will be done !'

This very humble and pacific letter might offer proofs, if any were needed, of La Harpe's tone and religious sentiments when he had time to look into his own heart and reason with himself. But in general, in his behaviour, the petulance of humour got the better of him and formed an obstacle in the convert's path.

Here is a very true story which I have had more than once from the lips of the amiable lady who was a witness of it and an accomplice to a small extent. -We may see in it a fresh proof of La Harpe's sincerity in his incomplete but genuine conversion. The scene was laid in the Château of Clichy, where Madame Récamier was spending the summer : La Harpe had gone there for a few days. The company were wondering (as all the world was wondering at the time) whether his conversion was as sincere as it appeared to be, and they resolved to test it. It was the time of mystifications, and they invented one which appeared perfectly fair to these lively and light-hearted young people. It was known that La Harpe had always been very fond of the fair sex, that that was one of his chief weaknesses. A nephew of Madame Récamier, a very young and apparently very pretty nephew, was to dress as a woman, as a pretty lady, and in this disguise to take possession of La Harpe's bedroom. They prepared quite a long story to serve as an excuse for this unexpected intrusion : ' She was to say that she had come from Paris, that she had an urgent service to ask of him, that she could not make up her mind to wait till next day, etc.' In short, in the evening M. de La Harpe withdraws from the drawing-room and ascends to his

apartments. Some inquisitive and mystery-loving eavesdroppers are already in ambush behind the screens to enjoy the scene. But what was the astonishment, the regret and perhaps the remorse of these frolicsome young persons, including the supposed lady who was sitting in a corner by the chimney, to see La Harpe enter without looking about him and simply go down on his knees to say his prayers, which were long drawn out ! When he got up and, approaching his bed, perceived the lady, he started back in surprise. But the latter tried in vain to stammer a few words of her part, M. de La Harpe cut her short, pointed out that this was neither the time nor the place to hear her, put her off till to-morrow and politely showed her to the door. Next day he made no mention to anybody in the château of this visit, and nobody spoke of it to him.

There was however something that was dearer to the heart of the converted La Harpe than the love of fair ladies and good cheer, that was the literary passion properly speaking, the itching to criticise, and he was never able to resist it. He gave a proof of it when in 1801 he published the four volumes of the secret *Correspondence* he had once maintained with the Court of Russia, at the period of what he called his errors. He published pell-mell even his errors, his judgments on his neighbour, all his calumnies of free criticism, suppressing a very small part of them. He could not bear to think of any of his writings being wasted. The *littérateur* in him survived everything else and would not sacrifice himself even to the Christian. The appearance of these volumes caused a terrible sensation and had a semi-scandalous success. Still good and convenient to consult for the men of the profession, their salt has long evaporated.

The publication of this *Correspondence* reawakened all the hostilities against the author by recalling all his contradictions at once. Palissot published for the 1 January 1802 a little pamphlet with the title : *ÉTRENNES. A. M. DE LA HARPE, à l'occasion de sa brillante rentrée dans le sein de la philosophie.* (He addressed to him, as in a satiric bouquet, a selection of his most piquant recantations.) About the same time Marie-Joseph Chénier published his satire, *Les nouveaux Saints*, in which La Harpe plays a great part, and is made to say :

Avant Dieu, j'ai jugé les vivants et les morts.

It would seem indeed as if, like that Roman emperor who desired to die standing, La Harpe had said to himself in his literary passion: 'It is right that a critic (even a converted critic) should die criticising.'

During the fortnight that I have been living with La Harpe, I have been asking myself (leaving aside the good parts of the *Cours de Littérature* which still form useful reading in youth) what pages of his could be offered to-day to his friends as well as to his enemies, what unquestionable sample of his talent as a talker, as a writer, as a man who, at least while professing, had a certain dramatic secret, and had the power of captivating. We have become difficult to please and have acquired strong tastes; we like strong things, strong in colour, if not in nature and feeling. After due consideration and much search, I have come to the conclusion that the work most calculated to find favour with all is his *Prophétie de Cazotte*, a few pages that were found among his papers and published after his death. In respect of invention and style it is, in my opinion, his masterpiece, and I will ask permission here to recall the framework, the design and the occasion:

'It seems to me as if it were only yesterday, and yet it was at the beginning of 1788. We were dining with one of our confrères of the Academy, a *grand seigneur* and a man of wit. The company was numerous and of every condition, courtiers, men of the gown, men of letters, Academicians, etc. As usual, we had enjoyed good cheer. At dessert, the wines of Malmsey and Constantia imparted to the social gaiety that additional freedom which did not always preserve the tone of good society: society had come to that point when everything is permitted that will raise a laugh. Chamfort had read to us some of his impious and licentious Tales, and the grand ladies had listened without even using their fans. Then followed a deluge of pleasantries on religion; one quoted a passage from the *Pucelle*; another recalled those *philosophic* lines of Diderot. . . . The conversation becomes more serious, the company break out into admiration of the *Revolution* which Voltaire had brought about, and they agree that that is his first title to fame: "He has set the tone to his century, and is read in the antechamber as in the salon." One of the company told us, with much laughter, that his barber had said to him, while powdering his hair, "*Do you see, Sir, though I am only a miserable blood-letter, I have no more religion than another.*" They come to the conclusion that it will not be long before the *Revolution* is consummated; that *superstition and fanaticism must positively give way to philosophy*, and they begin to calculate when it is likely to occur and which of the present company will witness the *reign of reason*. . . .

'There was only one of the guests who had not shared in the gaiety of this conversation, and had even let fall a few quiet sarcasms on our fine enthusiasm. It was Cazotte, a pleasant but eccentric man, who was unfortunately infatuated with the visionary ideas of the Illuminati. He raises his voice, and says in the most serious tone: "Gentlemen, you

may rest satisfied, you will all see this *great and sublime Revolution* that you desire so much. You know that I am a bit of a prophet; I repeat that you will see it."

Here the company protest; they ridicule Cazotte; they provoke him, they force him to say that he knows what will happen to each of them in this future Revolution. Condorcet is the first to challenge him; he receives his death sentence:

"Ah! let us see, says Condorcet with his sly and silly look and laugh, a *philosopher* is not afraid to meet a *prophet*."—"You, Monsieur de Condorcet, will expire stretched on the floor of a dungeon; you will die of the poison you have taken in order to escape the hangman, the poison which the *happiness* of the time will force you always to carry on your person."

There is some astonishment at this kind of pleasantry told in so serious a tone, then they are reassured, knowing that the good Cazotte is given to dreaming. This time it is Chamfort who returns to the charge with the *laugh of sarcasm* (for the character and tone of each interlocutor are very well observed), and he receives his answer in his turn:

"You, Monsieur de Chamfort, will cut your veins in twenty-two places with a razor, and yet you will not die for some months after."

Then the turn comes to Vicq-d'Azyr, to M. de Nicolai, to Bailly, Malesherbes, Roucher, who are all present: each in his curiosity touches Cazotte and receives his spark, and this spark is always the flash of lightning which kills. The word *scaffold* is the continual refrain.

"—Oh! it is a wager, they exclaim on all sides, he has sworn to exterminate us all."—"No, it is not I who have sworn it."—"But we shall be all subjugated, it seems, by the Turks and Tartars?"—"By no means: I have told you: you will then be governed by *philosophy* alone, by *reason* alone."

Meanwhile it is La Harpe's turn, who was among the guests; he had kept a little aloof:

"Here are miracles in plenty, he says at last, and you do not include me."—"You will be there, replies Cazotte, and you will be the subject of a miracle at least as extraordinary: you will then be a *Christian*."

At the word *Christian* one may imagine the exclamations and the laughter; the faces, which had become serious, light up again:

"Ah! replied Chamfort, I am reassured; if we are not to perish until La Harpe becomes a *Christian*, we shall be immortal."

Then comes the turn of the ladies. The Duchesse de Grammont, who is present at the dinner, begins to speak :

"Come now, she says, we women are lucky in not being concerned in *revolutions*. Not that we do not always meddle a little with them; but it is understood that we shall not be held responsible, and our sex . . ."
—"Your sex, Ladies, says Carotte, will not protect you this time; and whether you meddle or not, you will be treated just like the men, without any difference whatever."

We may foresee the continuation of the scene and the dialogue. It now becomes more and more dramatic and terrible. Cazotte comes by degrees to make them understand that still greater ladies than the Duchess will go to the scaffold princesses of the blood, and even greater than these princesses. It is becoming more than a joke; all pleasantry has ceased :

"You will see, the Duchesse de Grammont tries to say with irony, that he will not allow me even a confessor."—"No, Madame, you will not have one, neither you nor anybody. The last condemned who will be allowed a confessor by favour, will be . . ."

"He stopped for a moment :—"Well! who is the happy mortal who will have this prerogative?"—"It is the only one that will be left to him, and it will be the King of France!"

"The master of the house got up suddenly, and everybody with him . . ."

One should read the whole of this *Prophecy*, until the last word where Cazotte predicts his own end in more poetic and figurative style. I have reluctantly suppressed many details which form connecting links. The scene is admirably carried through in every point; there is not a superfluous and ineffective word. One should not forget even the *postscript* which is sometimes wrongfully omitted, since it gives to the story its true sense and its moral. Somebody is made to ask La Harpe if this prediction is true, if all that has been told really happened. *

"What do you call true? Have you not seen it with your own eyes?"—"Yes, the facts; but the prediction, this extraordinary prophecy . . ."
—"That is to say that what appears to you the most marvellous, is the prophecy. You are mistaken."

And, in fact, the miracle, the *real wonder* about it (according to La Harpe) is not Cazotte's prophecy, which is, but that mass of unprecedented and monstrous which were accomplished to the letter, and to make every one reflect who witnessed them :

He still unable, concludes La Harpe, to see in all that we have more than what is called a *revolution*; if you believe that

that one is like any other, then you have neither read, nor reflected, nor felt. In this case, the prophecy itself, *if it had taken place*, would only be one more miracle wasted upon you as upon others, and that is the greatest misfortune.'

I will not examine the reasoning, which is bold and inclines to introduce the supernatural because there has been something extraordinary: the only remark I will make now is that, on the day when La Harpe had the inspiration to write this powerful and spirited scene, his talent for the first time rose in proportion as his sensibilities were touched and his imagination impressed. With his *Prophétie de Cazotte* in his hand, he may present himself even to a stubborn generation to whom his *Cours de Littérature* is no longer a living law: they will be satisfied with this single memorable page, and after reading it will salute him.

On the 10 February 1803, the day before his death, La Harpe added a declaration to his will: 'I exhort all my fellow-countrymen, he said at the end, to entertain feelings of peace and concord.' It was high time, and the advice had something naïve coming from the bellicose old man who had disputed and fought to the death. Thus he left it as a legacy to those who came after to exercise all the virtues that he had so effectually dispensed with. It was decreed that to the last, and even in the article of the will, there should be a grain of sarcasm in the conduct and language of the man who, though he had many of the qualities of a judge, can only be classed in the second rank of men of judgment.¹

¹ During his last years La Harpe gave his lectures, not at the Lycée or the Athénée, but at the Hôtel de Bonneuil, in the Rue de Provence, near the Rue du Mont-Blanc.—He resided, at the end, in the Cloître Notre-Dame: it was there that Chateaubriand, Fontanes, Gueneau de Mussy went to see him.—M. Pasquier, who had followed his lectures at the Lycée since 1787, went to see him, and talked with him; he brought him to speak about the *Génie du Christianisme*, of which he professed himself an admirer. La Harpe said: 'I am not so far from agreeing with you as you think. To judge a book, there is one certain test: when you have cut away all the defects, if great beauties remain, then the work deserves to live. Apply this rule to the *Génie du Christianisme*, and you will see that it will stand the test.' Party spirit, in La Harpe, did not prejudice this final justice.

LE BRUN-PINDARE

Monday, 24 November 1851.

THIS original and incomplete poet is not unworthy of being remembered. Time and distance, whilst they quench prejudices, at the same time unfortunately weaken the interest that once attached to purely literary questions: this interest, however, may be revived, and become more durable, in every true study that penetrates to the man himself. Twenty-five years ago, when a new school of lyric poetry announced itself with *éclat* in France, Le Brun might have been studied as a precursor: ¹ now that this lyric school has run its course, and has given us more or less all that we could expect from it, Le Brun takes his place among those dead who are to be considered in themselves, without any reference to the present and in all impartiality.

For those who would be inclined to doubt his talent it should suffice, it seems to me, to look at his bust in order to comprehend instantly that such a head cannot be associated with the idea of ordinary powers. He has more than the mask of the poet: his physiognomy is striking, peculiar and characteristic. Long, thin, emaciated even, he has a handsome and severe brow, the arch and vault of his eyebrow are made to be the seat of thought, the nose is long, thin and delicate, the lip is likewise thin, and appears only to await the moment to discharge a cruel shaft. The chin is thrust forward and angular. All the lines of this remarkable face are hard, but clear and firm. If one has read little of Le Brun, and merely heard him spoken of, and then sees his bust, one can

¹ That is what I did in one of my first articles published in the *Revue de Paris* in 1829 (see the first volume of the *Portraits littéraires*).

easily agree that he was and must have been a poet. It remains to know what manner of poet he was.

Ponce-Denis Eschouchard Le Brun was born at Paris on the 11 August 1729 at the Hôtel de Conti (now the Mint). He was the son of a man 'who had at last attained to the post of valet de chambre to the Prince de Conti.' His family belonged to the small trading class of Paris and were honest shopkeepers. He was educated at the Collège Mazarin, quite close to the Hôtel de Conti; he had a brilliant school career, and showed early promise by his fondness for French poetry. Some poems of his written at that early period have survived. In 1749, at the age of twenty, he composed a piece that was to be read at the distribution of prizes. A schoolfellow of young Racine, grandson of the great dramatist, he received advice from Louis Racine, the author of the poem *La Religion*, and learned to attach himself to the poetic tradition of the seventeenth century more directly than was usual in his time. Le Brun's first Odes are consecrated to this young friend Racine, who gave up literature for commerce, and soon after perished in the Lisbon earthquake in 1735. The latter event inspired Le Brun, who at the age of twenty-six took his place among the lyric poets. He composed two Odes on this occasion, and one particularly, *Sur les Causes physiques des tremblements de terre* (*On the Physical Causes of Earthquakes*). He announced himself as an emulator of Lucretius, and aspired to be a painter of Nature. As a young man he meditated a great poem on this subject, of which only fragments remain. Le Brun did not collect his works in his lifetime; his odes and other poems were always published on separate sheets. Those which became best known in the first part of his life were addressed to Voltaire and Buffon.

Le Brun, having been appointed his private secretary by the Prince de Conti, and after he had been married a year, met in 1760 a niece of Corneille, in a state of poverty: he may be said to have discovered her, since it was he who brought her to the notice of Voltaire, and who started the agitation which resulted in the *Commentary on Corneille*. Le Brun, who had some grand sides to his talent, and whose lyrical instinct looked for themes all around him, greedily seized upon this one

which permitted him to call up the Shade of Corneille, and to bring it to Voltaire's notice. He did so in irregular stanzas, full of feeling, and animated by a generous inspiration and a rather fine magniloquence. Voltaire, thus appealed to, quivered and vibrated : without delay he called Corneille's niece to him, and Le Brun remained, in public opinion, the honourable mediator and the god-father, so to say, who had brought about this adoption.

From this time, however, unfortunate circumstances mingled with this worthy action, and betrayed the weak sides of Le Brun's character. He had published his Ode (1760), together with his letters to Voltaire and the latter's reply. Fréron, in the *Année littéraire*, did not miss this opportunity for criticism ; he rallied the lyric enthusiasm of the young poet, disregarded the real beauties in his Ode, and said in these very words : ' I have had many odes passing through my hands ; but I have never yet read one as bad as this of M. Le Brun.' He ended by recommending him like a schoolboy to take a course on the French language, and giving him the address of the professor. With regard to Voltaire and his entourage : ' I must confess, concluded Fréron, that Mademoiselle will fall into good hands on leaving her convent.' I pass over Voltaire's anger at this remark, which he thought deserving of the pillory ; but Le Brun was no less angry. He immediately conceived the idea of several pamphlets or diatribes in reply to Fréron's papers (*La Wasprie, l'Année littéraire*) ; he wrote them or had them written by his brother, and busied himself with circulating them everywhere to humble his adversary : ' Would it not be a happy idea, he wrote to Voltaire, to avenge the good taste that he offends, and at the same time to reduce this rogue to beggary, until he goes to the galleys ? ' Le Brun, in his divers little writings, always comes back to the idea of justifying and vindicating his Ode against unjust criticisms ; but he showed an exaggerated resentment, and drew upon himself from Voltaire himself, who was so good a judge whenever another was concerned, this lesson in tactics and good taste : ' There are some very good and very true things in the three pamphlets I have received. I should wish perhaps that you had shown less personal interest. The great art in this kind of warfare is never to appear to be defending your ground, but only to lay

waste your enemy's, and to crush him with good-humour.' It was this good-humour that was always wanting in Le Brun's criticisms; he is bitter, acrid, venomous, and disposed to be cruel.¹

Here then we have a lyric poet, an author of odes, greedy for lofty inspirations, who, at the very first step, turns aside from his path because he has been rather severely criticised. This unfortunate disposition of Le Brun will be his perpetual stumbling-block, and will end by putting his ambition on the wrong track, so much so that the man who aspired to the rôle of a Pindar and an august singer of great public thoughts will in the end be nothing more than a first-rate epigrammatist.

Let us tell the whole truth, and admit the difficulties of various kinds against which he had to struggle. What is the Ode, considered in all its elevation? It is a song intended to translate and express the intoxication of a people, the glory of the victors, the pomp of solemn weddings or the mourning of great funerals, some general sentiment which transports a whole nation at the same moment. Every ode is, by its nature, intended to be sung. Such were essentially the Odes of Pindar, the crown and glory of the Greek Games. With Horace the Ode has already lost this primordial character: some of those in which he celebrates great Roman events may have been sung indeed, but the majority of them were mere study odes, and our charming Horace, the model and treasure of cultivated minds, is himself already an eclectic lyric. Among the moderns, in the Middle Age, there existed a true, natural and living kind of lyric poetry. The troubadours of the South issued forth every year with the Spring, and made their rounds of the castles, accompanied by a few minstrels or musicians who helped them to put in action their gay learning. Besides, in the religious order, the Church also had its fine sacred odes, its *proses*: what is the *Dies iræ* but a terrible and sublime ode? But after the Renaissance, when the poets, led by

¹ There appeared at the end of 1762 and in the following year, a literary periodical which announced itself as a rival and enemy of Fréron, *Le Renommée littéraire*. Le Brun, who was thought to be one of the authors of the journal, and who was highly praised in it whilst his enemies were flouted, wrote to deny the rumour of his collaboration; but he certainly had a share in this publication, which, moreover, contained some distinguished critical bits.

Ronsard, began to compose odes in imitation of the Ancients, they dropped into an artificial style. After Ronsard, Malherbe himself was the first to be unable to escape it. When Racine, in his *Esther*, sings his melodious choruses, so well placed in the mouths of the pupils of Saint-Cyr, he recovers a true, natural, motivated lyricism. But when Jean-Baptiste Rousseau rouses himself in his Ode to the Comte Du Luc, or in an ode on the birth or the death of a prince of the blood, though he may produce a few brilliant and harmonious tones, we at once become sensible of the emptiness of his ideas and sentiments; the artificiality of this class of poetry becomes apparent; this author, who deliberately enters into a fine frenzy, finds a few indifferent readers, and leaves them cold. There lies the stumbling-block of the modern Ode. Le Brun was well aware of it; he would fain have associated the public with his inspirations and linked up to some degree the electric chain of the Ancients. When he sent a copy of his ode to the great tragedian Le Kain, he wrote to him: 'What a sensation might have been caused by this ode, in which the Shade of Corneille speaks, if you had read it on the stage after *Cinna* or *Les Horaces*! This custom of reading new works in public and on the stage prevailed among the Greeks and Latins: it was a source of glory and emulation; I have heard M. de Voltaire express regret at its having been abolished.'

What I wish to infer from the above is that, in order to be really living, a political or religious ode must be the vast and harmonious voice of the whole assembled people, who will recognise in it and salute their soul, and become exalted by listening to it: such was the ancient chorus. Now, among the moderns, excepting in very uncommon circumstances, this kind of union of sentiments, this sympathetic agreement can hardly take place except in the case of the song, at table or dessert. The sublime may steal into it (and such a thing has occurred), but only in little doses.

This did not satisfy Le Brun, for though he did not disdain the Anacreontic, he more usually aimed at the sublime. Hence we find a discord which strikes all sensible people. That rogue of a Fréron was not therefore entirely wrong when he described the poet at the moment when he thought he was touching *the beautiful soul of M. de*

Voltaire in favour of *Corneille's* niece : ' Since, he said, poets are apparently only moved by poetry, M. Le Brun has rubbed his head, made his hair stand on end, wrinkled his brow, bitten his nails, shaken the rafters of his ceiling with his shouts, and, in a divine enthusiasm, as he thought, produced with an effort out of his rebellious brain an ode in thirty-three stanzas only, and sent it to *Les Délices*.'

It will be always difficult to reply to this kind of pleasantry, and even to refrain from sharing it, when one reads in cold blood the odes, even the celebrated odes, of the moderns, with all their fustian, their mouth-filling words, their pompous images, quite out of proportion to reality, in reciting which with the right tone one is obliged in the first place to imitate what has been called the lyric bellow. ' Poetry ought to make people open their eyes wide,' the celebrated Italian lyric *Chiabrera*, the type of modern *Pindars*, used to say. Having said all that, let us accept the ode as an artificial literary kind, and see what Le Brun makes of it.

His finest odes, in my opinion, are those which he addresses to *Buffon*. He had early, and through a kind of instinct which does him honour, chosen that illustrious writer for his favourite hero and the object of his worship. He had comprehended that ' of all kinds of poetry, the ode was surely most calculated to please him, because it had most in common with the elevation of his ideas and the loftiness of his style.' The solemnity of the kind has a sort of natural appropriateness when applied to *Buffon*. When celebrating, for example, the book of the *Epochs of Nature*, Le Brun was entitled to exclaim :

Au sein de l'Infini ton âme s'est lancée,
Tu peuplas ses déserts de ta vaste pensée.
La Nature, avec toi, fit sept pas éclatants ;
Et, de son règne immense embrassant tout
Ton immortelle audace
A posé sept flambeaux sur la route des Temps.

In the ode in which this fine stanza occurs, Le Brun deplores *Buffon's* illness, which had carried away his wife the year before, and to which he nearly fell a victim himself. This ode is composed of three parts, which form as it were three different moods. The first seven or eight stanzas are devoted to a description of *Genius* in the depth of its discoveries and the majesty of its systems :

Tel éclatait Buffon. . . .—Then appears Envy, stirring up the hateful powers, and they try to snatch from this favourite and august painter of Nature the honour of his immortal works. In the third part, the Shade of Madame de Buffon, who died in the prime of life and beauty, is represented as addressing Fate, to make her relent and grant the recovery of her husband. When Buffon heard this ode recited, he caught himself shedding tears ; and it does indeed make a touching impression in spite of the lyrical mechanism and the magniloquence of the tone.

In another very fine Ode to Buffon, Le Brun exhorts him to despise envy and pursue his career without paying any heed to detractors. This piece breathes a deep sense of the justice that posterity accords to enduring works and slowly-erected monuments :

Flatté de plaire aux goûts volages,
L'Esprit est le dieu des instants,
Le Génie est le dieu des âges :
Lui seul embrasse tous les temps.

Le Brun loses no opportunity of expressing his supreme disdain of the jargon of those little society poems which were so much in vogue in his time, ' those charming and roguish little verses with which the jonquil sophas are overloaded.' He himself aims at fulfilling some of those difficult conditions which he imposes on genius ; he knows that a Muse will never attain to severe beauties, ' if she has not the courage to acquire in literary silence that virile power which neither *good tone* nor *good company* can enervate :

Ceux dont le présent est l'idole
Ne laissent point de souvenir :
Dans un succès vain et frivole
Ils ont usé leur avenir.
Amants des roses passagères,
Ils ont les grâces mensongères
Et le sort des rapides fleurs :
Leur plus long règne est d'une aurore ;
Mais le Temps rajeunit encore
L'antique laurier des neuf Sœurs.

It is unfortunate that these *nine Sisters* should come in at the end and weaken a robust thought with a worn-out phrase.—After Buffon, the man Le Brun admired most in his century, was Montesquieu : he placed him with Bossuet in the foremost rank of *lyric geniuses*, if the two

had tried to be lyric. After describing Envy attacking Montesquieu in his lifetime, he adds :

Mais quand la Parque inexorable
Frappa cet homme irréparable,
Nos regrets en firent un dieu.

Cet homme irréparable ! it is one of those new expressions, those bold and happy alliances, that Le Brun was always in search of, and sometimes found. Thus he used the expressions *âmes de gloire effrénées, navires effrénés*, and so many others for which he has been so often brought to book. But in speaking of Montesquieu both his poetry and language ring true. In the same ode he says, still in the same sense :

Vivant, nous blessons le grand homme :
Mort, nous tombons à ses genoux :
On n'aime que la gloire absente ;
La mémoire est reconnaissante,
Les yeux sont ingrats et jaloux.

These, especially the last two, are fine lines, which spontaneously engrave themselves on the memory. Although he constantly aims at them, Le Brun too seldom hits upon these facile and pregnant words, these words 'friendly to memory.'

Honour to him, however, whatever may be said to his discredit, and whatever we shall presently say ourselves, honour to the poet for having conceived, in this age of reasoning and bel-esprit, in this period of intrigues and universal enlisting under banners, such an idea of a calm, serene and meditative vocation ! In 1787 he finished that Ode which is usually printed at the end of his odes, and which he called his *Exegi monumentum*. In this he promised himself immortality as if he were sure of attaining it, and he deserved, if only for this powerful cry, not to remain a stranger to it. He felt, by the way, how discordant was such a wish with the circumstances in which it was uttered : 'How can one speak of the future, he said, to men who are devoured by the present ?'

After reading these few stanzas of Le Brun, one finds it difficult to explain the general sterility of his work, the miscarriage of so many lofty designs, and one finds the need of seeking the reasons elsewhere than in his talent. We will venture to touch and probe his sores : they are in his life and character.

He married, as I have said, in September 1759, a woman of intellect (Marie-Anne de Surcourt), whom he celebrates in his *Elegies* under the name of *Fanny*. He was thirty years old at the time. But hardly had a year passed, when Le Brun's behaviour to his wife betokened certain natural defects and even vices, which influenced his whole destiny. We have the details of his home, and what a home!

* Born with a violent character, infatuated with his own merit, he counted as nothing all that his wife did for him: it was a debt whose payment he received without any acknowledgment; and the smallest contradiction angered him as an attack on his authority. Then his contempt, his fury, his hatred burst out: the most degrading expressions poured from his lips, almost always accompanied by barbarous treatment.'

I extract these words from the statement or Memorandum published by Madame Le Brun in 1781, in the law-suit against her husband which had been begun in March 1774. Accused in her turn, she defends herself, and it is not my purpose to penetrate into the particulars of this wretched and unpleasant case, nor to make out which of the two was in the wrong: it will suffice if I draw from it a few unquestionable inferences.

A charge which is never alluded to in the documents relating to the case, but which was frequently made at the time, is that of Le Brun's having sold his wife to the Prince de Conti, on whom he was dependent. Even if it were true that such a shameful bargain had been concluded and that the Prince had, at the beginning, bought or obtained from Le Brun the *droit du seigneur*, any allusion to it, on the part of the husband or the wife, in the law-suit, became impossible by reason of the inviolability of that most serene personage. But there is no need to have recourse to this infamous conjecture, to find serious cause for blame in Le Brun; the statement and the depositions of the witnesses show that, whatever may have been the sins of the wife, those of the husband, both words and deeds, were such that no honest man, no man of good birth could ever have committed. Coarse language, ribald insults, blows, were everyday occurrences in this household, and were incessant for nearly fourteen years. An almost amusing circumstance, from which may be learned a little literary lesson, is the alternation of insults

and gallant little elegies, at least at the beginning of their married life :

' At first it seemed as if he could not help his conduct. When he recovered his proper frame of mind, he affected the deepest and most sincere repentance. Here follow some lines that he wrote in 1760, after a scene, and to obtain his pardon :

A TOI.

Si nous versons des pleurs, si de légers nuages
Menacent de troubler nos destins les plus doux,
Un Zephyr enchanteur, apaisant ces orages,
Calme aisément des flots qui grondaient sans courroux.
Qu'un regard de *Missis* dissipe tes alarmes,
Chère amante ! crois-en *Missis* à tes genoux, etc.

' But soon he disdained to act a part by which his self-esteem suffered. He yielded again to all his fury, and did not even dream of expiating it by his tears. He is no longer *Missis*, and Dame le Brun ceases to be *Fanny*.¹

Observe that Le Brun, in his judiciary Memorandum, brought in his poetry and songs as a proof that he made his wife happy :

Qu'un enfant des neuf Sœurs est facile à tromper !

he ingenuously exclaimed. I have sometimes wondered, when reading Le Brun's Elegies, how they come to be so hard, so destitute of true sensibility. We can now understand why : he had harboured hatred and insults too long in his heart to leave any room for tenderness and the accent of a delicate voluptuousness !

In this fatal law-suit which broke Le Brun's career and poisoned his soul, there was a very singular and unique circumstance, namely that his own mother and his own sister gave witness against him and in favour of his wife. The fury of the poet was unparalleled, and he perpetuated its expression in an atrocious poem *To Nemesis*, which is placed at the end of the first book of his Elegies. In this poem he gathers together all the mythological examples that are able to stir up his anger : Meleager, victim of his *dreadful mother* ; the brother of Medea,

¹ This, like the preceding quotation, is taken from the *Mémoires pour Marie-Anne de Surcouf, femme du sieur Le Brun*, suing for judicial separation (1781). It is proved that Le Brun committed adultery with his wife's *femme de chambre*, while living in the same house with his wife.

massacred and cut in pieces by his sister ; the husbands of the Danaïds murdered by their spouses, and adds :

Mais aucun d'eux n'a vu, dans ses derniers abois,
Épouse, et mère, et sœur, le frapper à la fois.

Since he appeals to Antiquity, we may say that in these odious lines Le Brun reminds us of an old Greek poet with a very ugly name, Hipponax, ' whose calumny, says Bayle, did not spare even those to whom he owed his existence, *qui etiam parentes suos allatrat.*' What was said of this frightful Hipponax was verified anew, to the letter, in Le Brun.

What Le Brun needed then to aid his natural lyrical genius and to nourish it worthily was, as we see, a chaste and pure life in the poetic sense, a studious and meditative life in which he might have invoked in the silence of the nights, not the Furies, but the Muses. A second blow of another kind that he suffered and which entirely destroyed his poetic designs and longer works, was the bankruptcy of the Prince de Guéméné, with whom he had invested his modest fortune (1783). There was a moment when he was reduced to literal poverty : even when he went into society, he was wretchedly clad. M. de Vaudreuil, an intellectual, ambitious and generous man, who aspired to play the part of a Mæcenas under Louis XVI, having met Le Brun, was enamoured of his talent, as he had been of Chamfort's. Beginning with the essential, he sent him, delicately, ' without making himself known, a large trunk filled with clothes and linen.' He praised him up everywhere ; he read some of his poems to the Queen ; he urged his claims with M. de Calonne. The latter too became enthusiastic for the poet, and, at the moment when the Assembly of the Notables was convoked, he sent him the plan, not of a financial reform, but of an ode or a dithyramb intended to celebrate that great moment. When we read this plan of ministerial poetry, addressed '*to the virtuous poet whom I admire and love,*' that is to say to Le Brun, we find that the latter has carried it out almost in a spirit of independence, although he could not refrain from comparing M. de Calonne with an eagle :

Le hibou peut-il voir de son regard timide ?
Ce que l'aigle et Calonne ont vu d'un œil rapide ?

But could he do any less for the man who saluted him as *virtuous*? Still more strange! Le Brun also compared Calonne with Sully, at the same time that he compared Louis XVI with Henri IV:

Digne sang de Henri, puis-je te méconnaître?
Que dis-je? il vit encore, et Sully va renaître.

We must not forget that, three months before, he received a pension of 2000 livres from the Controller-General, to encourage him in this good path.

This poem of Le Brun disgusted people at the time by the indecency of its adulation. He felt obliged to justify it, and did so in a sort of madrigal, which said that in celebrating Calonne, he had, *in default of happiness*, tried to sing of *hope*.

It was about this period that the amiable artist Madame Lebrun (who was no relation to the poet) gave an improvised supper-party which created a sensation, at which everything was done *à la grecque*. The *Voyage du jeune Anacharsis* had just appeared, and the beau-monde was raving about the black broth of Sparta. Madame Lebrun, who was expecting some very pretty women on that evening, took it into her head to attire all her company in the Greek style in order to prepare a surprise for M. de Vaudreuil: 'My studio, she said, which was full of materials for draping my models, provided abundance of clothing, and the Comte de Parois, who lived in my house in the Rue de Cléry, had a superb collection of Etruscan vases.' Every pretty woman who entered was at once undressed and draped, and her hair was done in the style of Aspasia or Helen. 'Le Brun-Pindare enters; they remove his powder, take off his side curls, and on his head, says Madame Lebrun, I adjust a laurel crown, with which I had just been painting the young Prince Henri Lubomirski representing *Love of Glory*. The Comte de Parois happened to have a large purple cloak, with which I draped my poet, and in the twinkling of an eye I turned him into Pindar, Anacreon. Then came the Marquis de Cubières, etc. . . .' It was only a lady-artist's fancy and the amusement of an evening; but what strikes me is that in more than one of Le Brun's odes, the disguise is more enduring and still subsists. Even in his talent we are too sensible of this serious and stilted parody of Pindar or Anacreon.

Le Brun was not less than sixty years of age: the Revolution made his character undergo another ordeal, from which he escaped with less honour and purity than any other; he had a good balance and a capital of hatred. In these times of great public excitement, his talent no doubt found a few true accents, and four or five stanzas of his Ode on the *victorious shipwreck* of the *Vengeur* are the best thing that the Republican epoch brought forth in poetry; but at what cost were these powerful flights bought? Le Brun, like his friend the painter David, dipped his brush at pleasure in bloody and livid colours. The most execrable lines of the period that we can quote are the work of the singer and pensioner of Calonne: and at the same time, forgetting the public pledges he had so recently given, he proclaimed himself as having always been a Republican; he mistook his inveterate ill-humour for principles. He had once written a certain line in which he called a king

L'insecte usurpateur qu'on nomme Majesté !

He armed himself with this sorry line as a proof of the conviction he had invariably held for thirty years. At the end of 1792 Le Brun said of the imprisoned Louis XVI:

Venez voir, Conseillers sinistres,
Un Roi sans peuple, sans amis !
Vous seuls fûtes ses ennemis,
Vils Courtisans, lâches Ministres !

But, once more, what ministers was he speaking of, after comparing Calonne with Sully? He said of Louis XVI in the Temple, consigning him to the scaffold of the 21 January:

Il pouvait régner sur les cœurs,
Ce monarque faible . . . et parjure !
Il prétend régner sur des morts !
Vainement la pitié murmure :
Le Ciel veut plus que des remords.

He persecuted Marie-Antoinette in some no less hideous lines, which must be remembered for ever to his disgrace :

Oh ! que Vienne aux Français fit un présent funeste !
Toi qui de la Discorde allumas le flambeau,
Reine que nous donna la Colère céleste,
Que la foudre n'a-t-elle embrasé ton berceau !

Combien ce coup heureux eût épargné de crimes !
 Ivre de notre sang, désastreuse Beauté,
 Femme horrible ! . . .

And this was the same man who, in some lines addressed to Voltaire on the occasion of his last visit to Paris (1778), had said :

Oh ! qu'il te sera doux, aux jeux de Melpomène,
 De voir Aménaïde en pleurs
 Intéresser à ses douleurs
Les larmes de ta jeune Reine !
Les Grâces, triomphant sur le trône des Lys,
 Ont ramené les Arts à la Cour de Louis.

This was the same man who, on the day when he received his pension from Louis XVI, rhymed a grateful acknowledgment which ended in these two lines :

Larmes que n'avait pu m'arracher le malheur,
 Coulez pour la reconnaissance !

This was the same man in fine who, in that famous *Exegi monumentum*, speaking of the Seine, exclaimed in the tone of a prophet :

Mais tant que son onde charmée
 Baignera l'Empire des Lys,

. . .
 Elle entendra ma Lyre encore
 D'un Roi généreux qui l'honore
 Chanter les augustes bienfaits !

Shame and disgust ! With his same lyric trumpet, in 1792, Le Brun, in an infernal stanza, demanded the violation of the royal tombs at Saint-Denis.

Purgeons le sol des patriotes,
 Par des rois encore infecté :
 La terre de la Liberté
 Rejette les os des despotes.
 De ces monstres divinisés
 Que tous les cercueils soient brisés ! . . .

But those who have read his earlier invocation *To Nemesis* have nothing more to learn ; after the imprecation of his mother no outburst of fury on his part can astonish us.

I thought it right to exhibit the sore unreservedly. I know not whether Le Brun's poetic talent would ever have been susceptible of development and growth in happier regions ; but by habituating himself to such thoughts and sentiments, he had assuredly made such growth impossible ; he had allowed the gushing and

fruitful springs within him to dry up. All the sweetness compatible even with power had long fled from his soul.

As a lyric poet, he has the breath of inspiration, but it is parched; he has the love or rather the affectation of fine words, and he abuses them to weariness. Stiffness, unevenness, frigidity and meagreness, neither grace nor softness, the rocks rather than the valleys of Parnassus (as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre said of him), characterise his odes. He has not the fertile details that smile to the eyes of the mind. He lacks ideas. He is not consistently nor sustainedly harmonious; his flashes of talent are isolated and testify to an irresponsive power, on which neither Heaven nor his parents ever smiled. . . . *Cui non risere parentes.*

This general criticism might be open to some exceptions, if we examined his Ode entitled *Le Triomphe de nos Paysages*, in which we find some fresh word-paintings, and that other with the title *Mes Souvenirs ou les deux Rives de la Seine*, in which there is a certain amount of sensibility, but of that sensibility of which self is the only object.¹

Le Brun, aged and almost blind, had obtained from the Government a lodging in the Louvre opposite the Pont des Arts, quite near to the painter David. Under the Directoire he contracted a second ignoble and unhappy marriage, which punished him for the sins of his first. His servant became his wife; she played him false² and played the tyrant. When the Government turned the men of letters out of their Louvre apartments, Le Brun took a lodging³ in the Palais-Royal, in the attics

¹ In the Ode *Sur le Triomphe de nos Paysages*, in which the poet has displayed such an ingenious abuse of mythology, I find, however, a happy softness of expression, in the following stanza for example:

Serait-ce l'onde de Pénée
Qui serpente dans ces vallons ?
Tivoli, Blanduse, Alburne,
Vous n'êtes plus que de vains noms . . .

I may also mention, for this tone of suavity and softness which is so rare with Le Brun, the ninth stanza of the XXI Ode of the first book: *Par elle un berger de Sicile*. . . . These pleasing passages can be counted.

² With the Chevalier Du Puy-des-Islets, an old *cheveu-léger*, who for many years sprinkled his little poems over the *Almanachs of the Muses*.

³ To be exact, he returned to the Palais-Royal; for he had already lodged there at the time of the Revolution, after leaving the Hôtel de Conti. It was there that the Chevalier de Chateaubriand went to see Le Brun in 1789.

of the house of the Café de Foy. He was fond of gathering around him a few men of letters, even a few women who were able to appreciate wit. His conversation was quite literary and on matters of poetry : history and politics interested him little, or, if he touched upon politics, it was merely to extract from them some subject for an ode or an epigram. Like so many aged poets, he loved to speak of, and became absorbed in, himself. At all times gallant with the women, he was as prompt with a madrigal¹ as with an epigram. His real, his incomparable superiority was in the latter. He wrote too many of them ; but a varied and excellent selection might be made. I will not quote any after the one I recalled the other day apropos of La Harpe (*Ce petit homme à son petit compas . . .*) : it might be called the queen of epigrams.

If Le Brun composed good, and even indifferent and poor epigrams, he was also the victim of them, and not of the worst kind. In his prolonged duel with the poet-grammarians Urbain Domergue or with Baour-Lormian, he did not always have the best of it ; he had taught his adversaries his secret. One day when he had been simply coarse, saying and repeating in every tone :

Sottise entretient la santé :
Baour s'est toujours bien porté.

Sottise entretient l'embonpoint :
Aussi Baour ne maigrit point.

Baour-Lormian's repartee was humorous and more witty than usual :

Le Brun de gloire se nourrit ;
Aussi voyez comme il maigrit !

¹ Even his blindness very often gave him the occasion for a madrigal. One day, wishing to show a lady down a dark staircase, he perceived that he had overrated his power of vision, and immediately improvised these lines :

Las ! j'y vois peu ; l'Amour qui n'y voit guère
Veut me guider. Dans ce péril commun,
Conduisez-nous, bel Ange de lumière :
Vous conduirez deux aveugles pour un.

He had more gallantry than sentiment, but his gallantry was often ingenious and delicate (see *La Méprise, ou les Flambeaux changés*, in the first book of his Epigrams).

Le Brun, who called himself the man of retaliations, could not think of a repartee on that day.¹

These plays of wit formed the amusement of curious idlers, who repeated them every morning under the Consulate and the Empire. They take one back to the good old days of the little epigram war between Scarron and Gilles Boileau, and it was the time of Austerlitz! I was nearly forgetting to say that Le Brun had, from the very first, quite rallied to Napoleon, who had given him a big pension (6000 francs). He praised the hero, as he had already praised indiscriminately Louis XVI, Calonne, Vergennes, Robespierre,² without any prejudice to the little epigrams he indulged in in the interval, which did not count.

Le Brun died on the 2 September 1807, at the age of seventy-eight. As nearly all his confrères of the Institute had been more or less attacked by him, they showed no eagerness to attend his funeral. The Cardinal Maury was more generous, and, though he was among the most severely wounded, he gave the signal to forget injuries. While the procession was under way, Andrieux who was walking in it remarked with astonishment that he was perhaps the only member present against whom Le Brun had not composed an epigram; he pointed out the fact to one who walked beside him, who replied at once: 'What! do you not know yours?

Sœur Andrieux, contez, contez, entendez-vous?
Si vous ne dormez pas, ma sœur, endormez-nous.'

It was a very harmless one this time. The story goes on to say that Andrieux, who had intended to deliver a speech over the grave, kept his manuscript in his pocket; but I do not believe it.³

¹ All the details of these literary quarrels may be found in the *Acanthologie* or Collection of Epigrams (1817), which we owe to M. Fayolle, a well-informed and benevolent *littérateur*, whom we personally have found very useful to consult on that period. He died at Sainte-Périne, where he was the last time we saw him.

² Le Brun's Eulogy of Robespierre may be found in a prose foreword which preceded his *Ode sur l'Être Suprême*, when it was first published.

³ There is another epigram of Le Brun against Andrieux, which, equally harmless, will appear more just, for the Tales of that man of wit never sent anybody to sleep; here it is:

Dans ces Contes pleins de bons mots
Qu' Andrieux lestement compose,
La rime vient mal à propos
Gâter le charme de la prose.

It is less an epigram than a semi-eulogy.

When Ginguené, who had always been Le Brun's friend, undertook to collect the poet's works, it is said that he found among his papers as many as ten epigrams against himself, and was piqued: this did not prevent him very faithfully accomplishing his mission as an editor. But he did not have the supreme good taste to publish at least one of the ten epigrams.

One of the most difficult things to accustom oneself to in forming one's judgment of men, is to do justice to their talents or good qualities, after treating of their defects or vices. We have a painful impression of this kind in respect of Le Brun. That elevation which he possessed neither in his heart nor in his character, we must however admit having sometimes discovered in his imagination. He had certain ideas which might be vague or exaggerated, but which were neither petty nor base. The only time that he ever travelled, he went as far as Marseilles and saw the sea: 'So I have seen the sea, he wrote, or rather I have seen it again, for my imagination has pictured it to me a thousand times, even vaster and more imposing. *Man has in his thought the glance of the Universe.*' He was uncommonly vigorous even in his old age; when he was threatened with total blindness, he was not grieved, and spoke of it with serenity and almost with grandeur in his ode on *Old Age*.

La nuit jalouse et passagère
Dont le voile ombrage mes yeux,
N'est qu'une éclipse mensongère
D'où l'esprit sort plus radieux.

He believed then in the triumph of the intellect and an immortality, at least a poetic and terrestrial immortality. 'I do not die, he said, *I quit the time.*' In the absence of every principle of honour and dignity, he still pursued with pride I know not what phantoms and idols which spoke to him of a higher world. It is that side of him alone that survives and still merits our regards.

MADAME DE MOTTEVILLE

Monday, 1 December 1851.

LET us rest for awhile with Madame de Motteville, the author of the judicious Memoirs, that woman of wise and reasonable mind who had a near view of the things of her time, who appreciated and described them in such perfect measure, with such pleasing justness. When the Memoirs of Madame de Motteville first appeared in 1723, the journalists and critics of the time, whilst praising their tone of sincerity, censured them for being too full of minute details, of little facts. This was not only the opinion of the *Journal de Trévoux* or the *Journal des Savants*, it was the opinion of Voltaire himself. To-day we no longer think thus. Those little facts, which appertain to an old vanished world, and which bring it before our eyes with entire truth, please and attract us: at a short distance of time they might appear superfluous and superabundant; at a greater distance they have again become new and interesting. And besides, if Madame de Motteville, true to her feminine nature, telling only what she has herself heard at first hand or on good authority, does not try to penetrate the secrets of the cabinet (some of which however she very well divines), she describes very naturally the general spirit of the situations and the moral character of the persons: it is this permanent side that time reveals in her, and which henceforth places her in so distinguished and well-established a rank.

Madame de Motteville, born about 1621, by her maiden name Françoise Bertaut, was a niece of the poet-bishop, illustrious in his time and still remarkable for his feeling and elegance, that Bertaut whom Boileau praised for his restraint, and whom Ronsard judged a *too sober poet*. I

begin by emphasising this foundation of sobriety, which seemed to belong to the race: Madame de Motteville had a younger sister whom, even in her childhood, they called *Socratine*, on account of her seriousness, and who eventually became a Carmelite nun. In the elder sister this seriousness, very mitigated and embellished, would deserve rather to be called reason and strong mind. It was in this sense that she was spoken of by those who knew her only by reputation: '*Mélise* may pass for one of the most reasonable *précieuses* in the isle of Delos,' we read in the *Grand Dictionnaire des Précieuses*. Mademoiselle Bertaut had received a very careful and very literary education. Her father, Pierre Bertaut, was a Gentleman-in-ordinary of the King's Chamber. Her mother, who came of a noble Spanish family, and had lived in Spain in her youth, was favoured by the Queen Anne of Austria, during the first period of that princess's residence in France: knowing Spanish as well as her own tongue, she was at once employed by the Queen to help her in her family correspondence, and treated as a friend. She profited by this favour to *give*, in the phrase of the time, that is to say to attach to the person of the Queen, her daughter, when she was only seven years of age (1628). But the Cardinal de Richelieu, who was uneasy about the young Queen's entourage, and who wanted to cut her off from all communication with Spain, removed this young child from her side: whereof Anne of Austria complained loudly. To all her complaints, 'she was answered, says Madame de Motteville, that my mother was half Spanish, that she was very clever, that I already spoke Spanish, and that I might be like her.' Madame Bertaut therefore took her daughter, aged ten, to Normandy, where her education was finished with care. The young girl still retained a pension of 600 livres from the Queen, and in 1639 she was considered worthy, on account of her beauty and good reputation, of being married to M. Langlois de Motteville, First President of the Chamber of Accounts of Normandy, who had been twice a widower. 'This was an ill-assorted marriage, we read in the *Journal des Savants* (January 1724); the President was eighty years of age, and she was only eighteen. So it is said that she sometimes tired of the half of the bed, and that, when the good man was asleep, she would make a *femme de chambre* take

her place, and that the old President never noticed anything.' If this detail, recorded in that serious Journal, is correct, that was the extent of Madame de Motteville's roguery. Her tranquil and passionless nature does not appear, moreover, to have suffered from such a union. 'In the year 1639, having married M. de Motteville, she says, who was rich and had no children, I had a pleasant life and an abundance of all things; and if I had wished to profit by the friendship he felt for me, and to receive all the advantages which he was able and willing to give me, I should have been rich after his death.' But she neglected these interested views, and, like all the exiles from Court, her thoughts and expectations were at this time concentrated on the approaching end of Cardinal de Richelieu, from which she expected a return to favour. At the death of the Cardinal and the King, one of the first thoughts of the Queen was to recall her old friends who had fallen into disgrace for love of her, and Madame de Motteville was of the number; she was henceforth attached to the Queen, less as a *femme de chambre* (which was her title) than as one of the persons of her conversation and intimacy. Sedate, discreet, well-conducted, sweet and cheerful of disposition without monotony, with a curiosity that was both serious and amused, with an observant eye that did not try to be penetrating or deep and which contented itself with taking in the things that happened around her, she thus spent twenty-two years full of variety, and some of them disturbed by the most violent storms. Faithful and devoted without any pretensions to heroism, she was able to reconcile the timidities of her sex with the duties and obligations of her condition, and to pass over so many visible and hidden rocks at Court, without deviating from her course or overstepping the rules and delicacies of a strict honesty: a woman in many respects, but the most reasonable of women, a person at once amiable and indispensable. She does not appear to have ever thought of remarrying, or to have known the tender passion. In the pleasant discussion she maintained by letter with the Grande Mademoiselle on the conditions of a perfectly happy life, she wrote to her: 'I was only twenty years of age when I recovered my freedom; it has always seemed to me preferable to all the other blessings

which are esteemed in this world, and, from the use I have made of it, it seems that I have been an inhabitant of the village of Randan,'—a village in Auvergne where the widows did not remarry. The name dowager, which was hers at an early age, had no terrors for her. She delighted in friendship and conversation: she was able when necessary to 'enjoy the sweets of the solitary, which are books and reverie.' A real and practical religion, which did not exclude but rather led her to philosophical reflections, supported and confirmed her in her virtue and prudence. Thus did life pass for this even and temperate soul, without much brilliancy, without any inner disturbance, and in a constant maturity.

The first question we ask about Madame de Motteville, as about every woman, is whether she was beautiful, and it appears that she was. 'Her portrait, which is at Motteville, says the *Journal des Savants*, represents her as a very pretty brunette.' The only engraved portrait I have seen of her, and that anybody may see in the Cabinet des Estampes, represents her with her hair arranged in the fashion of Anne of Austria, no longer in her first youth, with a full face, a double chin, a mild and placid look. The lower part of the face is however not very pleasing, and on the whole it does not call for a marked attention. It is in her mind that we must seek the delicate and charming features which distinguish her.

The principal figure around which Madame de Motteville's narrative turns is that of the Queen Anne of Austria, her mistress. The author does not pretend to be either a politician or an historian: she is a woman relating what she has been enabled to see with her own eyes or to hear from the best-informed persons. And as she was very sensible and very reliable, the most respectable among the knowing and initiated, those whom Retz calls the d'Estrées and the Senneterres, were fond of an occasional talk with her. Her ordinary place is in the cabinet, that is to say the royal chamber, she makes that her centre and most generally discusses the scenes which are presented to her observation from that coign of vantage. She does not however neglect, when occasion offers, to give an account of matters of wider interest, such as the episode of the Revolution in England which she gathered from the lips of the Queen of England herself, and of

which she makes a separate story ; she also enlarges on the Revolution in Naples, which took place about that time. ' It is a *strip* that I will drop as I go my way, she says of one of these occasional episodes ; it will find its place with the others of the same nature : and, as it will not be treated with more order and continuity, it will not be of greater price or value.' Madame de Motteville's good judgment, which led her to consult only reliable witnesses on these distant matters, and led the most reliable to take a pleasure in confiding them to her, imparts to these digressions and incidental matters more interest than she dares to expect.

She begins with an *abrégé* of the life of the Queen, from her arrival in France till the death of Louis XIII and the beginning of the Regency. But the original part of these Memoirs is that which begins from this point, and which treats of the things that pass within the author's range of sight. When she returns to Court in 1643, Madame de Motteville describes the divers persons on the scene, the divers interests of the cabals ; in the midst of these great intrigues she appears a mere spectator placed in a corner of the best box and perfectly disinterested : ' So I thought at the time only of being amused by the things I saw, as if it were a good comedy that was being played before my eyes, in which I had no interest.'—' A king's cabinet, she says again, is a stage on which are continually played pieces that interest' the whole world ; some are merely comic ; in others which are tragic the greatest events are always brought about by trifles.' Witnessing all these things with a clear-sighted mind and free from bitterness, observing them at first only for the amusement they afford her, she soon finds in herself a resource which she has inherited, that of writing ; at those moments which the other ladies devote to play or promenade, she shuts herself up and notes the things that she has seen and heard, in order some day to recall them to her memory.

The early days of the Regency of Anne of Austria are described in such a way by Madame de Motteville, that we become eye-witnesses with her. All the old friends of the Queen have returned after a longer or shorter period of disgrace : each of them counts upon enjoying the same favour as before, and they do not perceive at first that this Queen, whom they had left oppressed by Richelieu,

childless and still a Spaniard at heart, has become a mother, quite absorbed in the interests of the young King, and a quite French Queen. Nor do they notice that her heart is already won by Mazarin, and that in her affection and her indolence she has chosen him to be the Minister who will relieve her of affairs and make her reign. Madame de Séncé, Madame de Chevreuse, Madame de Hautefort, on returning to Court, have therefore much to learn over again, much to divine. Several of these former exiles, at the moment when they think they are again grasping fortune, will, to their cost, challenge her capriciousness and inconstancy: 'Behold then the Court, beautiful and great, but very embroiled, says Madame de Motteville, who cannot help enjoying the scene. Every one thought of his own designs, his own interests, his own cabals. The Cardinal, with his calm and astute intellect, was at work winning over one after another.' But a good number, thinking themselves sure of their ground, resist his advances; Madame de Motteville tells of unexpected disasters in these inner precincts, which result in fresh disgraces for the presumptuous and those who put on airs of importance. Apropos of Madame de Hautefort, who, with her uncompromising firmness and *her mind attached to her senses*, rudely resists the Queen, Madame de Motteville expounds her own code of Court morality, a morality that is tempered without being relaxed: 'We may give advice to our masters and friends, she thinks; but when they have made up their minds not to follow it, we should rather enter into their inclinations rather than follow our own, when we do not see any essential evil in them, and when the matter itself is indifferent.' Cardinal Mazarin's kind of cunning, his dissimulation, the grace and finesse of his play, that cabinet spirit in which he excelled, and 'which sets so many great machines in motion,' are rendered with fidelity and life by a person who, though she has no reason to be pleased with him, has the merit to appreciate with fairness his superior qualities. Among those who fell into disgrace with Mazarin were several of her friends; she does not forsake them at the moment of their fall; she visits them, she comforts them, and even tries, in some cases, to defend them before the Queen. By this straightforward conduct she prejudices herself in the eyes of the Minister; but the Queen has

enough elevation of heart to forgive her these manifestations of honesty and, when the first coolness is past, to harbour no ill-feeling.

If Queen Anne of Austria were more interesting to us than history makes her finally appear, we might borrow from Madame de Motteville a variety of portraits which she has drawn of her, and which are full of noble beauty and majesty. The *femme de chambre* (for here Madame de Motteville appears a little in that character) depicts her royal mistress with admiration and love from the moment of her awakening, from the moment when she rises and when they offer her her shift, until her supper and going to bed :

' After putting on a bodice and dressing-gown, she very devoutly heard mass ; and when this holy action was over, came to her toilet. It was then an incomparable pleasure to see her dress and do her hair. She was delft, and in this occupation her beautiful hands showed all their perfection to admiration. She had the most beautiful hair that one could imagine ; it was very long and abundant, and long retained its beauty against the ravages of time. She dressed with the care and attention that is permitted in persons who wish to look well without ornaments, without gold or silver, without false glitter or extraordinary pains. It was easy, however, to see through the modesty of her dress that she might be sensible to a little vanity. After the death of the late King, she ceased to paint her face, which increased the whiteness and clearness of her complexion. . . .

Full mourning became the Queen, and she lost by leaving it off. She was at that age of forty, ' so frightful for our sex,' says Madame de Motteville ; but she triumphed over it by her imposing mien as sovereign and mother. One day she led the young King to Parliament (September 1645) :

' She put on earrings of big diamonds mixed with very big pear-shaped pearls. On her stomacher she wore a cross of the same kind of very great price. These ornaments, with her black veil, made her appear beautiful and imposing, and in this state she pleased the whole Assembly. Many looked at her with admiration : all avowed that in the gravity and softness of her eyes one could read the greatness of her birth and the beauty of her manners.'

These are fine portraits and drawn almost unconsciously. In the disturbances that soon arose, Madame de Motteville exhibits the Queen with qualities which it would be unjust to deny her in spite of her faults : she had courage and pride ; ' the blood of Charles the Fifth gave her lofty manners ' and boiled in her veins. To these rather partial,

but by no means untrue, pictures of Anne of Austria, we must however always add and understand the little *sharp voice* which she had when angry, and whose tone is so well rendered by de Retz.

The Queen of England, so magnificently celebrated by Bossuet, is painted more familiarly by Madame de Motteville, who saw much of her ; and it is she, this time, who puts into this figure, solemnised in the funeral oration, the grain of realism :

' This princess was much disfigured by the severity of her illness and her misfortunes, and hardly showed any signs of her past beauty. She had handsome eyes, an admirable complexion, and a well-cut nose. There was something so pleasing in her face, that she made herself generally beloved ; but she was small and thin : her figure was even deformed ; and her mouth, which was not naturally beautiful, had become large from the leanness of her face. I have seen portraits of her, painted in the time of her beauty, from which she appears to have been very pleasing, and, as her beauty had only endured the space of a morning and left her before her noon, she was accustomed to assert *that women cannot be beautiful after they have passed their twenty-second year*. To give a complete picture of her as I saw her, I must confess that she was extremely intelligent, *with* that brilliant intelligence which pleases the spectators*. She was agreeable in society, courteous, mild, and unconstrained ; living, with those who had the honour of approaching her, without any ceremony. In disposition she was inclined to be cheerful ; and when in tears, if anyone happened to say anything amusing, she would stop them in some way to divert the Company.'

The reader will have observed that touch of observation and feminine malice, that the Queen of England having lost her beauty at twenty-two, involuntarily made that age a limit to the beauty of all women. There are many of these sly touches which betray her sex in Madame de Motteville.

On the occasion of the arrival of the Swedish ambassador (September 1646), Madame de Motteville renders the first idea that was formed in France of Queen Christina, and, whilst making herself the echo of those extraordinary praises, she mingles with them according to her wont, a light and gentle irony :

' Fame, she adds, is a great gossip : she often loves to overstep the confines of truth : but this truth has much force : it will not leave the credulous world long in its deception. Some time after, it was known that the virtues of this Gothic Queen were of an ordinary kind : she had not at that time much respect for the Christian virtues ; and, if she practised the moral virtues, it was through caprice rather than sentiment.'

In speaking thus, Madame de Motteville, who was

essentially a woman, covertly avenged her sex, who were rather outraged by the brusque and fantastic manners of this eccentric Queen, who affected the style and the qualities of a man.

This Fame who is a great gossip reminds me of one of the charms of Madame de Motteville's style, a simple, rather uniform style, rather incorrect in the arrangement of its sentences, touched up perhaps in many places by the editor, but excellent and quite her own in respect of language and expression. She uses some of those pleasing metaphors which enliven the texture. Wishing to say, for example, that kings never see evil and danger except at the last extremity, that they are hidden from them by a thousand clouds: 'Truth, she says, whom poets and painters always represent as quite naked, is clothed for kings in a thousand fashions; and no woman of fashion ever changed so often as she does when she enters kings' palaces.' Speaking of the cardinal's hat which had been promised for years to the Abbé de La Rivière, a favourite of Monsieur, and which the Prince de Condé suddenly demanded for his brother the Prince de Conti, she says that 'Discord threw a red apple into the cabinet.' Describing Mazarin's cunning in neutralising and turning to his own profit the very excess of hatreds and persecutions, she says: 'Cardinal Mazarin took insults as *Mithridates took poison*; which, instead of killing him, became, by force of habit, his daily food. So the Minister seemed by his skill to turn the public maledictions to good account; he gained the credit with the Queen of enduring them for her sake. . . . In these passages and in the whole current of Madame de Motteville's style we perceive a natural and poetic imagination, without too much prominence, such as became the niece of the amiable poet Bertaut. In a few passages we find even a luxuriance of images, of flowers, roses and thorns, some trace of the bad taste of the Louis XIII period; but they are only momentary, and her language as well as her judgment and thought are ordinarily ruled by good sense.

Madame de Motteville is indeed a contemporary of Corneille, and to a slight extent of the novels of that period; their influence occasionally appears in her language. Speaking of Cinq-Mars, she calls him 'that amiable criminal'; recounting the disfavours of those

who are struck by Fortune, she is affected by the thought of 'so many illustrious unfortunates'; even in her youth she looks back with a slight regret to the days of yore. Speaking of the old Maréchal de Bassompierre, who was the butt of the young men's ridicule, she says, after praising his generosity, his magnificence and gallant manners: 'The remaining years of the Maréchal de Bassompierre were better than the youth of some of the most polite of the time (1646).' She loved especially the elevated morality of Corneille's plays, and the noble sentiments which had purified the stage. When the Italian Comedy was introduced under Mazarin's auspices, she took little pleasure in these musical plays: 'Those who are good judges, she said, esteem them highly; for my part, I think that the length of the performance greatly impairs the pleasure, and that poetic lines, spoken without artifice, reproduce conversation and appeal to the mind more easily than song delights the ear.' All this savours of a just mind, a heart that is exalted rather than disposed to tenderness and passion. This Italian Comedy, performed before the Cardinal, aroused the enthusiasm of a few courtiers like the Maréchal de Grammont or the Duc de Mortemart who appeared to be charmed by the very names of the least important actors; 'and all together, in order to please the Minister, indulged in such strong exaggerations, that it at last became wearisome to people who were moderate in their speech.' Madame de Motteville was one of these moderate persons, and here she gives us the keynote of her soul. So, when I say that she was, by her tastes, to a slight degree a contemporary of Corneille, it will be seen in what sense I understand it, and that she corrected a tendency to exaggeration.

Although Madame de Motteville loved to recall and quote these gallant lines of her uncle :

Et constamment aimer une rare beauté,
C'est la plus douce erreur des vanités du monde,

she had a heart made for friendship more than for love; she was made for correct and well-regulated feelings, and a happy equanimity; in more than one place she expressed a desire for this state. She had acquired in her beautiful Normandy a love of nature and the country, but she could not indulge it in haste: 'The country,

she said, is only beautiful when combined with rest and solitude, when we are able to enjoy the innocent pleasures that the beauty of nature affords us in the woods and by the rivers.' She said again, speaking of kings : ' I esteem him very happy who knows them only by the respect that is due to their name, and who is able to enjoy the tranquil and even life of a good citizen who is honest, has enough to live on, and is not poisoned by ambition. That is the condition in which every reasonable soul should seek true happiness, which, though obscure, is tranquil and innocent.' This desire for a life of retirement frequently recurs in her work, and is expressed in a tone of sincerity that is not to be mistaken. She might have concluded her chapter on the Court in the words of La Bruyère : ' A sound mind derives from the Court a taste for solitude and retreat.'

She is fond of moralising in her Memoirs, and giving us serious reflections relieved by pleasing quotations ; she readily quotes the Spanish or Italian poets, sometimes Seneca, more often the Scriptures. These reflections have been thought too frequent and too long, which may be true of the last part of the Memoirs ; but she ordinarily manages to interweave them with the circumstances which prompt them. In the very fine passages on the character, the artifices and the talents of Cardinal Mazarin, she describes him, during a visit to Paris (May 1647), shut up at work in his room while the greatest in the kingdom are waiting in his antechamber, unable to penetrate to his presence. Murmurs are heard on all sides ; but the Minister comes out of his room, and all are silent :

' When he entered his coach to depart, the whole courtyard of the Palais-Royal was full of *cordons bleus*, of great lords, of men of that quality, who, from their eagerness, appeared to esteem themselves only too happy to get a distant view of him. All men are naturally slaves of fortune ; and I may say that I have hardly ever seen a person at Court who was not a flatterer, some more, others less. The interest that blinds us surprises and betrays us on the occasions which concern us ; it makes us act with more feeling than knowledge, and often enough it happens that we are ashamed of our weaknesses ; but it only becomes apparent through the wide reflection that each one owes to himself, and after the opportunity for doing better is past.'

She knows what too often is at the back of those grand independent airs which are assumed by the men who have failed to gain favour, and that blustering

pride which melts at the least advance and turns to servility. Madame de Sénece, who had hitherto been badly treated by the Cardinal and put on lofty airs, is chosen by him as a guardian to his nieces on their arrival from Italy, and behold her changed in a day :

‘Many a man appears valiant against the favourite who, at the slightest condescension on his part, becomes a poltroon ; and usually this arrogance ends in a grovelling which, in his rage at having been despised, he colours with the names of generosity, virtue, and love of the public weal.’

Mazarin, who is unable to make Madame de Motteville serve as his tool with the Queen and do his will, plagues and molests her, and keeps her on the *qui vive* ? according to his method when he is not sure of his people :

‘As he did not know my intentions, and judged me according to the opinion he had of the universal corruption of the world, he could not help suspecting me of meddling with many things that were contrary to his interests. He told me one day that he was convinced of it, because I never told him anything about others, because I listened to the malcontents, because I was in their confidence. . . .’

And indeed more than one malcontent was not afraid of confiding in Madame de Motteville without being intimate with her, and spoke to her ‘as to a person *who had the reputation of being able to hold her tongue.*’ That was just what Mazarin did not like, and made him complain : ‘This reproach, she adds, was a sufficient sign of a naturally mistrustful disposition, and showed how unfortunate we were to live under the power of a man who loved roguery, and who valued honesty so little that he made it a crime.’ She tried to counteract the Cardinal’s censures, which could not help transpiring, by inducing the Queen, by a few kind words, to remove the unfavourable impression they made upon others ; ‘for at Court, she remarks, it is easy to blind the spectators, and one should never give them the pleasure of knowing that we are not as happy as they imagine, or that we are as unhappy as they wish us to be.’

All her remarks on the Court, that *delightful and wicked country*, ‘that reason often makes us hate, but that we always love naturally,’ might have been written by Nicole, but a female Nicole, more agreeable and less severe than the other.

Sometimes, however, she lights upon expressions that

are fine in their vigour and moral energy. At a ball given by Cardinal Mazarin during Shrovetide of 1647,* she describes one after the other the principal beauties and queens of the feast, after which she reviews the super-numeraries, who are not the least loud and pretentious : 'The Queen's maids of honour, Pons, Guerchy and Saint-Mégrin, tried to make a few natural conquests, judging by the care they had taken to embellish themselves in every way ; happy if, among so many lovers, they had succeeded in picking up husbands according to their ambition and the unruliness of their desires !' That is only a piquant touch ; but soon, speaking more particularly of Mademoiselle de Pons, loved by the Duc de Guise, who is going to conquer Naples for her sake, and, not content or satiated with such a prey : 'This *pleasure-greedy* soul, she says, was not satisfied with an absent lover who adored her, and a hero who, in order to win her, aspired to become a sovereign. . . . Ambition and love together were not sufficiently powerful charms to occupy her heart ; she must needs go and promenade in the Cours and receive the incense of all her fresh conquests.' *A pleasure-greedy soul !* it is the feeling of honesty that communicates to Madame de Motteville's style this expression of disgust.

As a rule she is more sparing with her colours : her modest pen keeps clear of acrimony. If she and her companions are deprived by the Cardinal's avarice of many effective and positive fruits of the Queen's favour, she confines herself to a few playful remarks uttered in a tone of light and smiling irony. There is nothing in these Memoirs of Madame de Motteville to recall those other Memoirs, so distinguished but so bitter, of Madame de Staël De Launay, *femme de chambre* of the Duchesse Du Maine ; but then the situation was a very different one. Madame de Motteville resided at a large and real Court, attached to the person of a Queen who, with a mind of average range, but accommodating and agreeable, had a noble and generous heart, and repaid services with esteem. If we had to seek an historical kinship for Madame de Motteville, I should find it rather in the Memoirs of the wise chamberlain Philippe de Commynes whom she is fond of quoting, and the fruits of whose sound and judicious experience she sometimes recalls.

Her Memoirs become more serious and assume a more elevated historical character as we enter more fully into the movement of the civil disturbances and the troubles of the Fronde. Madame de Motteville formed a correct judgment about them, and, although she only assumes the part of a timid woman, some of her reflections are of a nature that it would have been well if they had been shared by many of the men. The long private conversations she had had with the Queen of England, had enlightened her on the extent of those dangers which at the beginning appear often merely a foolish ebullition and a subject for ridicule. Noting with a powerful judgment the delusion of the men of Parliament and their insatiable demands, which made them refuse all the first offers of accommodation and reconciliation, she boldly forms the conclusion 'that the corruption of men is such that, to make them live according to reason, they should not be treated reasonably, and to make them just, they should be treated unjustly.' She shows how respectable men, by their obstinacy in crying out against taxes and their abuse, come to the aid of the turbulent, and render them powerful assistance, as so often happens: 'Respectable men, not considering that it is a sometimes necessary evil, and that all times have been more or less equal in this respect,' hoped that disorder would lead to a greater order; and this word, *reformation* pleased them so much as a good principle, that it was agreeable to those who desired the evil through excessive folly and ambition.' There are moments when everything contributes to disorder and ruin, and when sedition is in the air. *The star, says Madame de Motteville, was then terrible against kings.* *

The first scenes of the Fronde are related in such a way as not to be eclipsed even by the accounts of the Cardinal de Retz. The latter gives us the scene in the street, in the Palais-Royal, when he succeeds in penetrating into it, and in the interior of the Archbishop's palace. Madame de Motteville shows us the inside of the Queen's cabinet, in which she is at first almost the only person who is

¹ 'Revolutions have never either mended or destroyed abuses; they only displace them.' It was not Madame de Motteville, it was M. Daunou, cured and too effectually cured of revolutions, who said these words in intimacy.

seriously frightened. The first day of the Barricades is spent almost entirely in making game of her : ' As I was the least valiant of the company, all the shame of this day fell upon me.' For a person of this interior she has from the beginning a very good grasp of the nature of the revolt in the city, and that quickly and well-ordered disturbance : ' The men of the middle class, she says, who had been very willing to take up arms to save the city from pillage, were hardly wiser than the populace and demanded Broussel as heartily as the street-porter ; for, besides that *they were all infected with the love of the public weal*, which they considered their own in particular, . . . they were filled with joy to think that they were necessary for anything.' These words, *infected with the love of the public weal*, have often been quoted ; but they must not be regarded as a piece of *naïveté* on the part of Madame de Motteville : she knew what she was saying when she used those words, when she compared the false love with which the seditious populace was seized at that moment with a malady or a plague. Madame de Motteville is not a blind Royalist : she believes in the right of kings, but also in the justice which rules them, with which she believes they are often inspired by God, and nearly always in this kingdom of France. Her ideal of a monarch is Charles V. The day when Parliament, relying upon I know not what ordinance of Louis XII, demands ' that no man shall be put in prison without being sent within the twenty-four hours before his natural judges,' she cannot help remarking that this article of individual guarantee, as we should say, ' was agreeable to the whole of France. The love of freedom, she adds, is strongly imprinted in nature. The wisest, who had hitherto disapproved of the encroachments of that Assembly, could not in their heart hate this proposal ; they appeared to disapprove it, because it was impossible for them to approve it in sight of the world, but they really liked it, and could not but esteem that piece of boldness, and wish it a favourable issue.' We see that Madame de Motteville would have made a rather liberal Royalist ; but this woman of wit and sense, who witnesses these terrible scenes, and relates them, is not taken in by grand words, nor by appearances ; she interposes remarks which honour the historian, and which would not be disowned by the politician : ' When the

subjects revolt, she says, they are pushed to it by causes which are hidden from them, and, as a rule, *what they demand is not what is needed to appease them.*' She shows how the very magistrates who had been the first to stir up the people, are soon astonished to see them turn against them and cease to respect them: 'They acknowledged themselves to be the causes of these disorders, and could not have remedied them if they had tried; for, when the people begin to give orders there ceases to be a master, and each individually wants to rule.' Let us look into ourselves, and consider whether that is not still our history.

But I perceive that I have chosen the subject of Madame de Motteville to stray for a moment with my readers into the painful circumstances of our present dissensions, and I will not again be led away by allusions which she could too easily provide. During the first Fronde Madame de Motteville ran some risks in Paris. Having been unable to accompany the fugitive Queen to Saint-Germain in the early part of 1649, she was afterwards, when trying to join her, stopped with her sister by a furious populace at the Porte Saint-Honoré, and had to take refuge at the foot of the high altar in the church of Saint-Roch; from this predicament she was delivered by a few of her friends who had been immediately informed. She joined the Queen later and occasionally left her, for this distinguished lady was, as she humbly confesses, neither an amazon nor a heroine; she found it difficult to rise above the terrors or even the weaknesses of her sex. Present or absent, however, her fidelity was never at fault. When peace was restored, Madame de Motteville resumed at the Queen's side those habits of a regular, serious and tranquil life which suited her so well. In this land of snares and perfidies her virtue, her delicate probity exposed her, however, to the last to certain vexations which her calm and prudent disposition, sustained by the esteem of the Queen-mother, helped her to bear. Religion took more and more hold of this soul, so naturally well-regulated and disposed to receive it. Her enlightened and submissive religion prompted a few pages of her Memoirs which are as charming as they are solid and sensible, on the quarrels of the day, on the disputes of the Jansenists and the Molinists, into which the women were not the least eager to enter: 'It costs us so dear, she says with a

reminiscence of Eve, to have wished to acquire the knowledge of good and evil, that we must agree that it is better to be ignorant of them, especially we women who are accused of being the cause of all the mischief. . . . Whenever men speak of God and the hidden mysteries. I am astonished at their boldness, and I am delighted that I am not obliged to know anything beyond my *Pater*, my *Credo* and the *Commandments of God*.' Madame de Motteville carefully follows the line that Bossuet traced in these matters.

One should read the whole page, which the amiable author crowns with some very fine lines of Italian poetry, showing that her mind, though submissive, did not eschew a few reasonable ornaments and embellishments. This rare lady, this honest woman who exhibited so much judgment and intelligence, died in December 1689, at the age of about sixty-eight. We can only appreciate her at her full value if we accompany her through the whole course of her Memoirs, and follow her in her development and continuity: quotations and an analysis can give only a very imperfect idea of this slowly-moving, full, restful and absorbing book.

SIEYÈS¹

Monday, 9 December 1851.

SIEYÈS is one of the most important figures of the Revolution, and at the same time perhaps the most singular. His influence was great, real, positive, and on many points it is still shrouded in mystery: there is something strange and occult in him. Eminent historians and biographers have approached him from his public side. M. Mignet, who always appeared very much impressed by his original and systematic genius, appreciated him very fairly in his Notice. A young Doctor of Law, M. de Beauverger, published a few months ago a Study in which he ably expounds and discusses Sieyès' ideas on the constitution and organisation of society. But, in spite of these substantial and judicious résumés, it may be said that, if Sieyès the politician has been formulated, Sieyès the man only appears to us in a sort of distant haze. We are still in want of a work dealing with him, similar to those which have recently made us acquainted with Mirabeau and Joseph de Maistre. Not only have his political works and rare speeches never been collected into a body; but his letters, his papers, the private and silent studies which he accumulated during so many years, and which he continued longer than is supposed, none of all these have come out, and yet they exist: we knew it; but when we were told that this precious family trust had been given to M. Hippolyte Fortoul (now Minister for Public Instruction and one of our old friends), and that with these first-hand materials he was preparing a complete history of Sieyès, we asked him to allow us a preliminary glance into a portion of

¹ *Étude sur Sieyès*, par M. Edmond de Beauverger, 1851.

this work. He has very generously acceded to my request, and I have been enabled to spend a few mornings, alone and surrounded by manuscript notes, philosophical essays, plans of Constitutions, and above all intimate letters, familiar and confidential communications, those which the most trusting keeps to himself and which the most distrustful only pours out upon his paper in moments of great bitterness. In a word, I have penetrated into the secret of Sieyès, and that is why I dare to speak of him to-day.

I will endeavour before everything to reveal the man and to outline the shape of his mind, one of the most eminent and absolute that ever issued from the hands of nature. Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, who died in our days on the 20 June 1836, at the age of eighty-eight years, was born at Fréjus, in the Department of the Var, on the 3 May 1748, so that he was over forty years of age when the Revolution of '89 broke out. How were these forty years of meditation and solitary reform spent?—He came of an honest middle-class family, and was the fifth child. He received his first education in his father's house and at the hands of the Jesuits of his native town, and finished it with the Doctrinaires at Draguignan. He would have preferred, with several of his comrades, to enter the artillery or the military engineers; but on account of weak health and a feeble constitution he was intended, or in his own words, condemned by his family to the priesthood. He was sent to Paris to study philosophy and theology at Saint-Sulpice; he was fifteen years of age at the utmost. There he studied much and other subjects besides those which were taught him, or at least he took them in quite a different sense, and even at that early age revealed a philosophic and independent mind. I say independent, for he did not slavishly follow any of the masters of the day, neither the Encyclopedists, nor Condillac, nor Rousseau. Even in a political sense it cannot be said that Sieyès was a disciple of Rousseau; he criticised and refuted him at that early age. Sieyès was *born a master mind*, if we may say so; and he remade with pen in hand each of the works of metaphysics and political economy that he read. We possess all his manuscripts of that period of his studies at Saint-Sulpice or the following years, and it

may be readily imagined that his superiors looked askance at these bold essays. Before he had finished his course of studies Sieyès was amicably called upon to remove to another establishment, and went over to the Seminary of Saint-Firmin, in the Quartier Saint-Victor, to finish the necessary term for taking his degree at the Sorbonne. He left the Seminary for the outer world at the age of twenty-four, in 1772; but this world seems to have been long restricted to a few rare private relationships. Even as a young man he lived a very retired life, although he gave evidence, as we are assured (and I can easily believe it), of the most delicate and pleasing mind, when he consented to open out and develop.

He had learnt music at Saint-Sulpice. He had a charming voice, 'rather weak and low in conversation, but sweet and expressive in singing.'

I have before me a number of his reflections on music, of tunes jotted down with his own hand, and what he called the 'Catalogue of my little music,' that is to say of all the *ariettas*, *ambigus* or songs taken from the comic operas in vogue, which he had procured: we see even a list of those he wished to acquire. On the first page of this Catalogue I read:

AIRS FUGITIFS:

By Albanesi: "*Bergé-e légère, je crains . . .*" No. 35.

By Trial: "*Il faut Annette pour . . .*" No. 19.

By La Borde: "*Vois-tu ces colchets se noircir . . .*" No. 109, etc.

Then come the *Ambigus*:

"*Aimez-vous, aimez-vous sans cesse . . .*" No. 168.

"*Jeunes amants, imitez-le zéphire . . .*" No. 170, etc. etc.

But if this Catalogue reveals only the virtuoso young Abbé, the man of whom a woman one day said: 'What a pity that so amiable a man wanted to be profound!' the philosopher immediately reappeared in his reflections on music: he is 'in search of a philosophical language that is *universal*, melodious, harmonic and instrumental.' Early he carries back everything, even music, to his ideas of reform and social improvement, and he proposes to make it play a great part in the public fêtes.

when that ideal society which he loves to imagine is established.

The succeeding reflections written in 1772 to 1775 on every matter and every book that occupies his attention, which he refutes or remakes, on Condillac, on Bonnet, on Helvétius, on the Economists, would need a series of chapters, and I can here take only a general survey of them. But I observe in the first place that in this mass of studies every subject is treated of : metaphysics, political economy, language, mathematics, music—yes, everything except *history*. The latter subject was indeed always in disfavour with this absolute mind which aimed at extracting everything from reason. Here is a passage which bears the date 1772 and is entered under the heading *Political Economy* ; all his disdain for existing facts, all that first planned political ideal which so long occupied and impassioned Sicyès' intelligence, are plainly indicated :

' I will leave the nations that have been formed by chance. I will imagine tardy reason to direct the establishment of a society of men, and will present an analytical picture of its *Constitution*.

' I shall be told that I am going to compose a *romance*. I will answer : So much the worse ! I should have preferred to find in the order of facts what I have been obliged to seek in the order of possible things. Many others have occupied themselves with combining *servile* ideas, always in accordance with events. When we meditate them with a sole desire for the public interest, we are obliged at every page to keep in mind that the science of sound politics is not the science of *what is*, but of *what should be*. Perhaps some day they will be confounded, and we shall then be able to distinguish the history of human follies from political science.

' If we give the name of *romance* to the plan of an edifice which does not yet exist, a romance is assuredly a piece of folly in physics : it may be an excellent thing in politics. I cannot imagine why one and the same course of proceeding should be prescribed for all the sciences, without any regard to the essential difference of their object and their genius. That the natural philosopher should be satisfied with observing and collecting facts is quite as it should be. It is his object to know nature, and, since he has not been called upon to assist in the planning of the machinery of this world, since it exists and keeps on its way independently of his *correcting* meditations, he must confine himself to experience. Physics can only be the science of *what is*. But *art*, whose object it is to bend and accommodate facts to our needs and enjoyments, *art* is ours. Speculation and operation are equally ours. It is a good thing not only to observe, but to foresee effects and to guide them, whether in connecting or separating causes, or in strengthening or weakening them. You must admit that the most useful agent is here not the man who cannot and will not see beyond *that which is*.'

That is explicit. It is curious to remark that a portion of this passage, which was written in 1772, was inserted

by Sieyès fifteen years after, in 1788, in his first pamphlet entitled : *Vues sur les moyens d'exécution*, in which he traced out the course and the code of the approaching States General. He then added a note to the effect that he did not deny 'that the historical tableaux of the nations might furnish useful subjects for meditation.' He made a certain reservation in favour of history studied without superstition. But that was only the politeness of the metaphysician and a formal salutation. Sieyès did not believe much more in history than he did in theology or mythology :

'It seems to me, he said clearly, that to judge of what is taking place by what has taken place, is to judge the known by the unknown. It is more reasonable to judge the past by the present, and to admit that the supposed historical truths have no more reality than the supposed religious truths.'

So that nothing could be more opposed at the outset than his method and Montesquieu's, which was entirely founded on historical considerations, and which takes account of all the *precedents* of humanity.

Does not Sieyès, who disagrees so decisively with Montesquieu, on that very account agree with Jean-Jacques Rousseau? Not as much as one might think. At the outset he grants society all that Rousseau denies it; not to the society that he had before him, and that he tolerated in all the developments of life, but to a really modern society that he had in his mind, and that should be directed by the art of the reformer. He wrote later, in 1794, when the Reign of Terror was over, speaking of Rousseau :

'Alas I did not this justly celebrated writer, who would have died of grief if he had known his disciples, this philosopher who was as perfect in feeling as he was weak in his views, did he not, in his eloquent pages, so rich in accessory details, so poor in substance, himself confound the *principles* of social art with the *commencements* of human society?'

Everything that a serious writer prints is valuable, but what he writes for himself in the form of a simple note is still more valuable, for it gives us his thought without any polite or precautionary formalities. Now, here is the note that I read in Sieyès' papers, and that he wrote at the time of the Convention, in sight of the abuses and excesses of the system :

'Rousseau.—They take the *commencements* of society for the *principles* of social art, of that social art of which the French had no idea a few years

ago, and the name of which was first hararded in the *Moyens d'éducation* (his first pamphlet written in 1788). What would they say of a man who undertook to construct a ship of the line with no other theory than that of a savage building a raft? All the arts would vanish if we thus traced them back to their origin. In all things art has come very late. It presupposes great progress since their beginning.

This social art, which Sieyès prided himself on having first discovered, or at least professed, consisted before all things in the division of labour, applied to the different functions and the different powers of society. Sieyès, that enemy to all privilege and all aristocracy, had no less aversion to a pure democracy, and he believed that art consisted precisely in making the power of the people reasonably applicable to modern nations, by means of a system of representation which he combines with infinite ingenuity.

The Marly Waterworks or Pascal's Calculating Machine is not more complicated than was Sieyès' final Constitution. It reminds me of a cleverly constructed clock that is put under a glass case and kept in a museum as a curiosity. It is entirely conceived with a view to elevating and transforming the popular principle, to extracting and deriving from it in all senses an action of pure reason. It proves at least wherein Sieyès' art differs from the elementary and *point-blank* logic of Rousseau.

One evening, on the 25 January 1791, after a dinner at Madame de Staël's, the American Gouverneur Morris, who was one of the guests, wrote in his Journal:

'At three o'clock I go to dine with Madame de Staël. . . . The Abbé Sieyès is here, and descants with much self-sufficiency on Government, despising all that has been said or sung on that subject before him, and Madame says that his writings and opinions will form in politics a new era as that of Newton in physics.'

Sieyès a Newton in politics! that sounds very fine; but what appears to me certain, and what, I think, all will admit who have cast their eyes on this series of new and bold thoughts, which go back to his early youth, is that there was in Sieyès something of a Descartes, that is to say of the man who would like to make a clean slate of all that has preceded, and who, in every matter, social, economical and political, begins a new and *single* organisation.

This unity he considered essential, and nothing was

important to him that did not bear upon it. One of the reasons why he had so little esteem for Buffon, whom he calls 'a brilliant declaimer,' was that many of the views of that great naturalist did not agree together and, if they were compared, might appear contradictory.¹ In Buffon's majestic generalities Sieyès often saw only a false unity, whose defect was disguised behind an abundance of words. For his own part, he thinks of reforming the language as everything else; he would even begin there; for he thinks he has made the discovery that 'our languages are *more learned than our ideas*, that is to say that they proclaim a knowledge and ideas that do not exist, and yet every day crystallise the efforts of a prodigious number of investigators.' These investigators feast themselves as best they can on what appear to them in the form of time-honoured expressions. Sieyès expresses this error, which is too natural in man, by a rather quaint but very ingenious image: 'The head of a man appears to me like a mass of little *compartments* resembling *stomachs*; they try to fill themselves no matter how; they are satisfied with anything (we might think they were proof to poison). As soon as they are filled with follies or truths, they are content.' There are entire branches of knowledge which are false, that is to say founded on something non-existent (we see that he is thinking especially of theology and the old science of metaphysics), and these sciences owe their origin to false *relationships* clothed in *words* which afterwards satisfy the vulgar and even the crowd of literates:

'The signs remain, he says, and pass on to the following generations. the existence of chimeras and the terror they cause. The revision of knowledge or the verification of lessons received is not continued in the educated generations, if to their misfortune those *sham* signs should resist that operation, show it to be dangerous, or even impossible. Ignorance is then spread over the surface of the earth, and the unfortunate human beings can expect nothing but a life burdened with the horrible weights of disorder.'

We might imagine we were listening to the Roman poet Lucretius or some austere Epicurean of old Rome,

¹ If I might presume to advance a singular opinion, I should say that Buffon was both a *spiritualist* and an *atheist*. The first of his chapters on *Man* are written by an idealist. His dissertations on *Nature* and his *Époques* are written by a naturalist who can easily dispense with God.

sadly deploring, from the heights of his gloomy wisdom, the errors of men who have strayed from the path.¹

Such appears to me the attitude of the meditative Sieyès during these years of solitary study. His own error, as that of almost all solitary students, however powerful they be, is that he believes a radical reformation to be possible, and that the human race, though it were only the elect, is able once for all to obey reason. Sieyès would like in the first place a simple, philosophical language, without any make-believe :

'The most reasonable language, he says, should be that which makes the least show, which, so to say, *allows the glance of the understanding to pass by* and permits it to concern itself with things only ; and certainly not that coquettish language which tries to attract all eyes ; or, if you prefer it, language, being, as it should be, only the *servant* of ideas, should not try to assume the part of the *master*. Why then those long dissertations on harmony, on the period and on all the qualities of style ? There is something unreal in all these pretensions.'

Later, when he has seen the abuse of language and eloquence in the great assemblies, and the consequent aberrations of public opinion, he will say the same thing with a very keen conviction ; and, although the following passage appears to apply only to the academic style, it refers to more than one kind of eloquence in Sieyès' mind :

'Why is our oratorical and academic style so studied ? . . . Truly we no longer have an object ; the audience to whom my speech is addressed assist at a game in which they have no interest. . . . They are ready to examine its forms, to judge the talent. That is all. I should like to know whether in Greece, in free Rome, the orators concerned themselves with any other art but that of attaining their end. We, who

¹ Here is another thought on Religion, which is also Lucretian : 'Man on his arrival on earth observes to enjoy ; he begins to acquire a knowledge of causes. Religion comes in to arrest his researches and places (?) the causes in Heaven. From this moment the perfectibility of man is arrested ; and his baffled efforts, instead of increasing his knowledge and his enjoyment on earth, are transported and lost in the heavens. Religion was therefore man's first enemy.'

I have indicated elsewhere the gulf which separated Sieyès from Chateaubriand, whom he quite frankly called a *charlatan*. He could not read through one of his books to the end. I can well believe it : they belonged to two directly opposed and antipathetic families ; the one a metaphysician and turned inward, the other all on the outside ; Sieyès an iconoclast of false ideas, Chateaubriand the worshipper and re-inventor of brilliant idols. The latter was an obstacle to the work of the Sieyès and the Condorcets ; he directed the renascent century to the external imagination and the worship of images.

have no end, we embellish, we bring forth music for the senses, images, etc. We have some fine tricks, we produce perceptible effects, we communicate vague or particular emotions, but we ignore the art of explaining a course of conduct, and of urging men to adopt it. . . . The speeches which are delivered in the English Parliament have an object; they do not resemble our oratorical style; they have not our magniloquence, our lofty tone. . . . They are men who do business; we are idlers and we stop to put on airs. They walk, we dance; we have some fine artifices, and we neglect the *art*, because we have no use for it. 'You tell me of demonstrative, forensic, and other styles of oratory. Be it so.—Should these styles suffer the effects of feudal inequalities, of the prejudices of good tone? Must we *gild* our thoughts in order to employ a colour of style worthy of men who are ashamed of having anything in common with the people? Must we take from the flowers their natural colours in order to colour them with more nobility?'

But here it is too easy to reply: Man is thus made. To believe that the people are less fond of *gilded speech* than the upper stratum of society, is an error. Those orators of Greece and Rome, to whom Sieyès appeals in support of his idea, were often themselves only brilliant and generous seducers. Even on those questions in which they are most interested, men desire to be beguiled, charmed or carried away rather than corrected and convinced. 'One should be *mad* or *drunk* to speak well in the known languages,' writes Sieyès somewhere. Be it so. Only we must conclude that the world is full of men who are slightly mad or intoxicated. And Sieyès himself, that powerful brain, endowed in the highest degree with the intensity of conception, would thus grant to pure idea the first place, if he were equally in possession of that gilded language and those electric chains which eloquence delights in throwing like a net around herself.¹

Sieyès appears to us in his first form, as he will be

¹ The human mind, after all, never does anything but what it is called upon or obliged to do. Bossuet, for example, gifted by nature with powerful, abundant speech, which flows and falls spontaneously, like a river, *from the bosom of Jove*, has no need to look for ideas, nor an order of things elsewhere but around him. Hence, rightly considered, he is only, as has been said, 'the sublime orator of common ideas.' On the other hand, a man of difficult speech, like Hegel (or of rare speech like Sieyès) cudgels his brains, runs a wild-goose chase and broods. The one digs wells in the new rock: the other paints pictures and frescoes on every wall and under every known cupola—I know of no minds that are more opposite and antipodean than Bossuet, the magnificent panegyrist and apologist of all established things, of all accepted and ruling doctrines—a mind which never had a doubt! and Sieyès reconstructing, re-inventing society and the human understanding from base to summit, from top to bottom!

later and to the last, all of a piece in respect of thought, desiring an exact, rigorous connection, a perfect concatenation and a *single* order in all the objects of every science, and even in the sum total of our knowledge: 'Without that, he says, we have but loose, *unstitched* brains whose knowledge does not hold together: they know nothing, although their memory is full, and are of no service.' Nothing can equal his contempt for those *unstitched* brains which unfortunately constitute the overwhelming majority of men, even of distinguished men. He compares them with pieces of music which lack *unity of melody*: 'Men of letters are too like music without unity.' As for him, in the whole of this first part of his life, and when he betrays himself as he has done to me, thanks to this mass of evidence in his own hand, in the intimacy of his meditation and his intelligence, one may recognise and greet him at once (independently of his errors) as a great social *harmonist*, a mind sincerely desirous of improving humanity and perfecting its government; who has in him, if not the love that comes from the soul and the entrails, at least the high and serious enthusiasm that shines on the brow of the artist-philosopher for the great political and moral architecture.

However, one is not a Southron for nothing, and a positive and practical outlook, ready to seize occasions, mingles in Sieyès with what, in a Northern philosopher, might easily turn to dreaminess. Timid, proud and suspicious as he was, the young Abbé tried to find his place in this so badly ordered old world. His great powers, appreciated by all who had seen him from childhood, gained him the post of canon (1775) to the Bishop of Tréguier, and he followed him to his diocese. During these years he attended the States of Brittany as deputy of that diocese, and he brought from them a deep aversion to the privileged class that he saw in full exercise of its power in that rude province. Later, having been appointed by the diocese of Chartres a Conseiller-commissaire in the Upper Chamber of the Clergy of France, he lived at Paris, highly esteemed in his Order for his administrative capacities, moving in the best societies without making himself cheap, and pursuing those deep studies to which events were to give a sudden appropriateness.

In a note in the first volume of his *Histoire de la Révolution*, Bertrand de Molleville seems to imply that, but for an oversight of the Minister Brienne, Archbishop of Sens, which lost him an Abbey worth 12,000 livres, the Abbé Sieyès might have become one of the most zealous apostles of the *ancien régime*. Sieyès had attracted notice in 1787, at the Provincial Assembly of Orleans, by his continual and often embarrassing opposition to the views of the Government; somebody spoke of him to the Minister as a very dangerous adversary, whom it was important to make sure of. Here is the supposed dialogue between the Minister and the officious informer:

'—But how is it possible to make sure of him?—There is only one means, that is to bind him, not with iron, but with chains of good gold.—What! you think we might gain him over?—I have no doubt of it; he is not rich, he is fond of spending, he loves good cheer, and consequently money.—How much must we give him? Do you think that a pension of six thousand livres on an Abbey would suffice?—No, he is worth more than that.—Well, then! twelve.—Very good; but instead of giving it to him as a pension, give him an Abbey of the same value.'

The affair thus begun, and soon afterwards negotiated with the Abbé Sieyès, who yielded acquiescence, would have been carried into execution, according to Bertrand de Molleville, but for the forgetfulness of the Minister, who twice failed to remember his promise and the man who was the object of it. There is nothing to prevent our accepting this anecdote in the gross, though we are not obliged to draw the same conclusion from it. To believe that the man who, in 1772, was reforming society in solitude and silently preparing what he called his political *delineaments*, would have suddenly changed his views and his conduct at the dawn of 1789, and would have turned himself inside out at the pleasure of the Court, is an error founded on complete ignorance of his character. At this time Sieyès was anything but a dainty and fastidious man, who loves his ease and good cheer; he was rather the philosopher-artist, ardently absorbed in his work, in his cherished plan, which he could not help soon bringing to light, though it should have been a little impeded and retarded for a moment by a Minister's favour. His pride and conviction in his discoveries, and I venture to add, his love of the public weal at the beginning of his career, would very soon have made him hop lightly over that difficulty.

Three important pamphlets of Sieyès appeared in the interval between the dissolution of the Assembly of Notables and the gathering of the Constituent Assembly: (1) the brochure entitled *Vues sur les Moyens d'exécution*, 1788 . . . ; (2) the *Essai sur les Privilèges*, 1788 ; and (3) the famous pamphlet: *Qu'est-ce que le Tiers-État ?* January 1789. By virtue of these three writings, Sieyès was one of the precursors of the Revolution of '89, of that same Revolution which, ten years after, he dismissed, so to say, by delivering it, on the 18 Brumaire, into the hands of Bonaparte ; for it was his strange destiny to be the same at the opening and the close, and to play a leading part on the first day as on the last.

I shall not be expected to analyse these pamphlets in detail ; and I will say at once wherein Sieyès appears to me to have failed and erred, and wherein he succeeded. He completely erred in believing that men could be taught reason in the gross and that it could become the law of societies in the future. Speaking of the *ancien régime* and the old world, he wrote, about 1774 : ' The human race is a body that is gangrened on one side, and whose movements on the other side, are convulsive. The men who think are the living and free part which will give back life to the whole body. If thought were lost, good-bye to the human race ! ' He was mistaken in stating the problem so absolutely, in condemning, as he did, the whole of the past, and in putting his whole trust in thought for future ages. He erred still more when he imagined that the happiness of the world was to depend on such or such a form of Constitution which he never ceased to think out during his long nights of law-planning, and which he demanded of the most rational and most complicated social mechanism. For a moment he believed himself to be, as Madame de Staël said of him, the great promulgator of the law of the future. Those are gigantic ambitions, soon baffled by the nature of things. But where he was completely successful was in his war to the death against privileges, in his conception of a society that should be entirely purged of them and in which civil equality should be the law. This conquest of '89, with which Sieyès' name is for ever associated, still subsists : it has permeated the different forms of Government since 1789, and it seems destined

still to permeate them, as a henceforth inherent condition of everything that would endure.

I know not whether Descartes really founded a philosophy, and, although some of his self-styled disciples assure me that he did, I doubt it; but I know that he made short work of the last impediments which Scholastics placed in the way of the human mind, and that is his glory. I will say the same of Sieyès with respect to the privileges which, more than anybody at the time, he combated and helped to destroy.

Historically, like Descartes, he is unjust; he does not deign to take account of the past; he considers privileges at the outset as shapeless *acrescences* of the social Body, which barbarism alone was capable of regarding as beauties. He disregards the generous element which the Nobility, regarded in its day and hour, introduced into the Constitution of the State. He pursues it on every occasion with a bitter and calumnious irony. Strange to say! whenever he has to speak of the Clergy, he is wiser. Contemptuous as he is of facts, in this case he takes account of them. The truth is that the facts relating to the Clergy concern him, and that in this matter personal interest warns him not to rely on theory alone.

One of Sieyès' chief titles to fame, with the abolition of privileges, of which it is merely the application and the result, is the destruction of provincial barriers, the new equal division of the territory into departments, of which the more complete and definitive unity of France was the outcome; he was the promoter of it and one of the great co-operators.

I do not intend in this short survey to follow Sieyès through his political life; I will only endeavour to note the variations and the crises of this great mind, without stating what may be said elsewhere.

Brought into contact with experience, he was quick to undeceive himself; he had, as I have said, a just sense, 'useful and lucid views in the most serious crises'; he proved it at the most decisive moments of the Revolution, when there was room for advice.¹ This is the

¹ Observe how Sieyès comprehended and presaged all the principal moments of the Revolution, and marked them by pithy sayings which have survived:

opinion regarding him not only of friends, but of his adversaries.

'Those who have considered him, says Mallet du Pan, merely in the light of a political metaphysician and a manufacturer of Constitutions, only know one side of him. Fertile in inventing means of execution, capable of holding his tongue and waiting, not given to conceiving chimerical plans, and combining dexterity with firmness, no man is better able, when a great interest demands it, to keep command over himself and gain it over others.'

We must not confound Sieyès with Condorcet, his first disciple: a disciple of Sieyès in the second part of his life as he had been Turgot's in the first part, Condorcet lost himself, when he held the pen, in the theoretical exposés and the analytical deductions which often led to arid Utopias. Beside Sieyès he was no more than an abstract populariser; but the latter, besides the originality of his inventiveness, had the outlook and sometimes the experience of the statesman.

We know the magnificent words with which Mirabeau, in the sitting of the Constituent Assembly of the 20 May 1790, when the motion on the right of peace and war was under discussion, invoked the lights and the advice of a man 'whose silence and inaction, he says, I regard as a public calamity.' I have before me the series of letters or notes from Mirabeau to Sieyès, from the day when he acknowledges receiving and thanks him for his two pamphlets on *Privileges* and the *Third Estate* (23 February 1789): 'There is then a man in France! he already exclaims, and truly a man called to be our guide, in the National Assembly which is to decree our destiny.' Mirabeau never ceases to express this deep feeling of

On the eve of the convocation of the States-General he asks: *What is the Third Estate?* and he boldly replies: *It is everything.*

At the moment of the secession of the two Orders from the deputies of the Third, he invents for the latter the denomination of *National Assembly*, which settles the conflict and annuls privileges.

When the Constituent Assembly, a prey to passions and intrigues, decidedly goes wrong in its work, he gives utterance to these words which establish the era of deviations: '*They wish to be free, and they do not know how to be just!*'

Under the Terror, he utters the only words of the sage: *I have lived!* as who should say: *Hide thy life!*

At the end of the Directoire, he, the representative of the idea, is the first to feel his impotence, and exclaims: *I need a sword.*

Those are the decisive *mots* which name and, if I may say so, which baptize each situation.

deference in every note, and calls him on every occasion *the master*: 'My master, for you are that, in spite of yourself!' He repeatedly tries to join alliance with him, and proposes a union: 'It is becoming very important that I should speak with you, that my audacity should unite with your courage, my fire with your admirable logic.' But Sieyès, in accordance with his habit, holds himself in reserve and on his guard. One day at the Assembly, during a stormy sitting, they exchange questions and answers on a little note, which is rather puzzling to us. Mirabeau complains of the distrust which is in Sieyès' nature; the latter writes on the note: 'Who are to be trusted to save us from events?' And Mirabeau writes underneath: 'Who are to be trusted? those who have a great interest and a great responsibility of glory: you and I, for instance!' In June 1790, when sending him the speech he had delivered on the question of the right of peace and war, in which occurred that solemn apostrophe on the *calamity* of his silence, together with the resolution he had moved on the same day in the Assembly to decree a solemn mourning for the death of Franklin, he wrote him this note full of ellusion and homage:

'The 11 June 1790.—Here, my very dear master, is my *Droit de la guerre*, which will be to you an eternal monument (if you do not burn it) of my sentiments and my reproaches.

'Here is my Motion of to-day, the success of which will have given you pleasure. Our nation of monkeys with parrots' throats, who will not alter until you reform them by a system of education the like of which has not yet been seen, will prostitute this new formula of respect (*the solemnity of a national mourning*): otherwise the future legislatures will also wear mourning for you. May it be half a century before that happens! *Vale et me ama.*'

Observe however those cruel and insulting words: *our nation of apes with parrots' throats*, and calculate the gulf between such an idea and the legislative theories with which they were trying at the same time to associate this same nation.

It was not the first time that Sieyès had remarked this contradiction, and he was beginning to entrench himself behind the distrust which was natural to his mind.¹

¹ In a manuscript note of his, written about 1788, and perhaps sooner,

He was one of those that Juvenal speaks of, who easily fall into the passion of silence :

Rarus sermo illis, et magna libido tacendi.

When he saw the Revolution borne away like a chariot, and breaking away from all the calculations, all the art of the drivers, he abstained. He fell into what he called *the philosophic silence*. Elected a member of the Convention, witnessing the inner struggles of that formidable Assembly, his disposition to contempt and disdain only increased, and I have found frequent evidence of it traced with his own hand in these private notes. We know his reply when asked what he had done during those terrible months of the Terror : *I have lived*. I read on one of his pages a more indirect, more expressive and more emotional translation of the same thought :

'Maucloux, he says in a sort of allusion to that threatening and precarious situation, to which no one could expect to see a morrow ; Maucloux, who died in 1708, wrote these charming lines when he was more than eighty years of age :

Chaque jour est un bien que du Ciel je reçois ;
Jouissons aujourd'hui de celui qu'il nous donne ;
Il n'appartient pas plus aux jeunes gens qu'à moi,
Et celui de demain n'appartient à personne.'

Following these lines, in which we recognise the friend of La Fontaine, I read, likewise written in Sieyès' hand, some Latin thoughts taken from Sallust and especially from Lucan ; among others : *Jusque datum sceleri* (Crime had the force of law), which he utilised in the Notice which he published on his own life in the year III, and

we read this kind of intimate description which betrays his moral temper : it is the starting-point of his character before the Revolution :

'HERACLITUS, DEMOCRITUS.

'I am not exclusively either a Democritus nor a Heraclitus. The inner feeling, the love of men, invite interest, tears ; soon I feel indignation, I quiver, I rail at tyrants, and in the end I am not appeased but diverted. The feeling of indignation is most frequent ; returning to the same subject, it is turned, not upon tyranny, but against the cowardice, the meanness of the victims, and I despise them ; I see that they do not suffer as much as they deserve, that their measure is not yet full ; I see them taking as their degradation, in their misfortune, and I laugh, not with pride, but with contempt ; and I turn my eyes away at once as if not to sully them with such a shameful sight.'

this other passage : . . . *Ruit irrevocabile vulgus*, which expresses the fatal strength of the triumphant democracy.

A very significant passage too, which was verified before his eyes in the struggles and the bloody party defeats which he witnessed, is this : . . . *Semper nocuit differre paratis* (When one is ready, it is always dangerous to put off a *coup d'État*).

On the occasion of I know not what committee meeting which he attended about this time, in the thick of the anarchy, he wrote upon a scrap of paper, for his own edification, these unfinished notes, which vividly render the repulsive impression of a noble intelligence at the sight of proceedings so disgraceful to a nation and the human mind :

' Committee of the 20 March.—Paillasse (Chalier ?), half drunk, holding forth on the plan of the war, and examining the Minister by interrogations and censure ;

' His hearers not even aware how ridiculous it all is and how complete is the speaker's silliness ;

' The unhappy Minister, eluding the questions by a coffee-house answer and the story of the campaign ;

' These are the men who are charged to conduct business and save the Republic !

' Radiant in his success, H. de S. (some other *sans-culotte*, Hérault de Séchelles perhaps), in his distraction, looked a very happy rascal smiling at the roguery of his thoughts.'
•

Those are Sieyès' revolutionary sketches. And if, at some similar meeting, he imagines this question which is so often asked regarding him : ' You are silent ? ' — ' *What matter !* ' he replies to himself, *what boots the tribute of my glass of wine in a torrent of spirituous liquors ?*

But in the following thoughts the bitterness of this superior mind, disappointed of an immense hope and for ever despairing of humanity, breaks out and overflows in all its plenitude. In Sieyès' grief and expression of contempt there is a morbid excess, and the Lycurgus who has come to grief against human experience has turned into a misanthrope. He imagines somebody reproaching him as follows :

' Everything is abused. You should have seen that the most certain truths, the best ideas offer to rogues and scoundrels new means of exercising their baneful passions.'

This is his reply :

'With the most thoughtful judgment, one may be deceived once, but not a second time. This effect of new truths was striking, and yet he (Sieyès) perceived it long before you, and *he closed his hand*. You who accuse him, you are doubly wrong compared with him. After sharing his first error, after sharing it with all your country, you have forcibly helped to abuse, to corrupt, to completely overthrow the principles offered : in short, you who demand an experience that you were far from having yourself, you take it ill to-day that I profit by acquired experience, and that I am not willing to expose myself anew to your reproaches.

'Let us hold our tongue !'

This *taisons-nous* is the perpetual refrain. Believing that he holds the truth and has but to distribute it among men, he withholds it and closes his hand.

He says again, continuing to vent to himself his distrust of men, and bitterly suffering from their calumnies :

'None of them says : He sees better than we. They all say : He sees differently, therefore he is a dangerous man, etc. *You get hold of one, and you talk reason to him. If he understands, he will soon say in good faith : Why don't you do something ? Why don't you print ? You must instruct. . . .—*Woe to the man who instructs ! Men wish, suffer themselves to be flattered : they do not suffer themselves to be instructed.* To see further, to see more deeply than they, to communicate to them better ideas, to argue, etc., seems to them only the beginning of a confidence of a man who has plotted more deeply. To them you are a more clever rogue. They suspect you, you are dangerous. Scientific progress, depth of reasoning are to them only soundings, designs, certain treacheries. They distrust the intellectual movement which resolves a political problem, as a wicked machination. *To plunge into the avenues of the Academy, is in their eyes hiding oneself in the wood.* It is therefore *folly to speak with them*, and especially to try to instruct them. They would be ready to say that for their part they are content to be honest people : they regard you as one who tries to draw them into a conspiracy.'

In the Notice on himself which he published, Sieyès reproduced some of these ideas, but never with the same verve and overflowing bitterness.

After rendering great diplomatic services to the French Republic during his ambassadorship to Berlin and elsewhere, and directing, in committee and cabinet, many important internal affairs, elected a member of the Directoire, Sieyès was an acknowledged power and was sought after on all hands. I have perused a mass of letters of every kind, written to him at this period by all the most distinguished men in France, and Germany also added that enthusiastic homage which she grants

only to her great philosophers. All this failed to soften or cure this soul, which utters this painful cry in the very midst of its power :

'I am sought after!!!!'

'I detest society, because it does not believe in moral goodness. If you speak of measures which have had some success, of some clever intrigue, of some momentarily applauded project, they will look at you with an air of cunning and intelligence ; they will almost praise you and flatter you as if they wished to be let into the clever designs they think you are harbouring ; they *believe* in your infamy, because *they* would wrap themselves up in it as if it were an honour. It is half immorality, half ignorance on their part. But they disgust me, and if I yielded to my first impulse, I should say to them : *Fie!* because you are mean rascals, vile creatures, you are ready to suppose that others are like you ! I shall end by hating them. What ! have I passed my whole life in drudgery, in unhappiness on my own account, with the most generous and the most ardent solicitude for the happiness of others, to be rewarded with the reputation of an accomplished man who is capable of being adopted by coteries of vile rascals ! Men, I repeat, believe neither in honesty nor in moral goodness. All public spirit is alien to them. They divide themselves into coteries of intriguers, conniving at some base action or some succession of base actions distinctive of each society. Those who are least well situated for combining in this way, those who are reduced to greed, to the ambition of stealing a few souls, of cheating their neighbour for the smallest profit, they are what are called the good people of the country, the honest or virtuous classes !'

We see to what degree of pessimism and real injustice he has come. And he continues to discuss this same personal problem as Alceste or Jean-Jacques might have done, and to torment his irritating sore :

'They have never approached me but with the intention and hope of cheating me. How is it that, having always spoken to them in the language of truth, and, in this sense, having been always completely taken in by them, I have, however, so often escaped their snares ? The reason is that they never believed that I was telling them the truth. They never expected me on the path that I said I should take. They cheated me by lying : I paid them back unconsciously by telling truth.'

One does not write such pages for oneself alone, when one is not deeply convinced of the truth of what one writes. I infer that Sieyès had indeed been much slandered, that his exalted moral feeling had suffered, that his proud delicacy had revolted, with the result that the most sensitive part of his being suffered from a malady like that which afflicted Rousseau and other great solitary minds.¹ This makes it clear to me how it came about

¹ In Sieyès' irony, in his final egotism, in his consummate contempt of humanity, there was a suggestion of Swift. The latter expressed his misanthropy in a satirical and humorous shape, the other in the form of direct moral reflection.

that Sieyès afterwards surrendered so easily to Bonaparte, and (in the shape of a national reward) accepted from him wealth and favours. He had long drunk from the cup of calumny, and he thought in the end that he would be a great fool, when the need of repose invited him, to trouble himself henceforth about human gossip on any matter.

Danton said with his energetic coarseness : '*I am full up of men.*' Sieyès was at least surfeited with them.

This lofty, powerful, deep, ingenious and shrewd, rather fantastic but always original mind, falling from the height of that first and radical idea of reform which he contemplated in all branches of human knowledge, condition and *sociality*, as he called it, had come (strange extreme !) to think 'that what is called *common sense*, far from being *common* indeed, is an anomaly, a *deformity* in human nature.' He despised that human mind which had responded so little to his views. He himself underrated the real, the only but so important conquest which he had gained and which nothing henceforth could deprive him of, a society without privileges.

All his illusions were lost, though he still perhaps cherished one : that was the final adoption of that model Constitution that he had elaborated so long before, which was to break the stream of democracy by dividing it, and to vanquish the passions of men by balancing them and counteracting one by the other. The first meetings for consultation which followed the 18 Brumaire dispelled this last illusion of the artist rather than the philosopher. He saw that his ideas would never be adopted except in a mutilated and corrupted form, that is to say in a form that would make them unworthy of being avowed and acknowledged by himself. For, to him, a man of unity, a piecemeal idea lost all its value : *All or nothing !* was his motto.

Buried in silence and gloomy meditation under the Empire, afterwards exiled for fifteen years to Belgium under the Restoration, we saw him, after 1830, return isolated and end his days among us as a forgotten witness of another age. The oracle had ceased ; he had become accustomed to silence, but not to be even consulted was a thing to which he was not perhaps resigned in the same degree. Towards the end, Sieyès lived more

than ever with his own thoughts, and did not come out of himself. When he was urged, during his exile at Brussels, to fix his reminiscences in writing, to relate and dictate what he had seen, he replied :

' *Cui bono ?* to what purpose ? Our work is great enough to dispense with our commentaries ; our actions will instruct those who have the curiosity to know our thoughts, and all our warnings would be useless to put on their guard against our faults men who, coming after us, will but acquire our wisdom at the price of the same misfortunes.'¹

Persons who came into contact with him in his last years (and they are few) describe him as inactive, reserved, more than ever given to that obstinate passion for silence : ' I no longer see, he said, I no longer hear, I no longer remember, I no longer speak ; I have become entirely negative.'

He would sometimes stop in the middle of a sentence, and say : ' I cannot find the word, it is hidden in some dark corner.'

He would, however recur with some pleasure to his former days, and correct a few points which belong to history.

' The first, he said, who exclaimed : *Vive la Nation !* was I, and it created much astonishment at the time.'

He denied having uttered the words which are attributed to him after the 18 Brumaire : '*Gentlemen, we have a master ; this young man knows all, can all, wills all.*' They are fine words however, and worthy of utterance. But he merely said to Bonaparte, who asked him why he would not remain a Consul with him, and insisted upon offering him that second place : ' It is not a question of Consuls, and I will not be your aide de camp.'

He also denied having uttered, in pronouncing judgment on Louis XVI, that famous mot : *La mort sans phrase*. He merely said, and that was too much : *La mort*. He supposed that, somebody having inquired how he had voted, was answered : *Il a voté la mort, sans phrase* ; and that this was literally accepted as his vote.

He was fated to regret that fatal vote, but for which he might indeed have been entitled to say what he one day wrote privately to Roederer : ' You know me ; you have never seen me share in an evil action, but

¹ Notice of M. Fortoul.

have sometimes seen me share in the good that was done.'

He was indignant that those words : *J'ai vécu*, in which he summed up his conduct under the Terror, should have been interpreted in a selfish and unfeeling sense which he had not intended.

He would smile with pity at the insults of which he was the object at the period of the 18 Brumaire. Some slanders had circulated about the employment of the sums remaining in the treasury of the Directoire. These calumnies are refuted by the official accounts : they are still more strongly denied by Napoleon, who in his *Mémoires* recognises both the weakness of the man and his fundamental integrity ; there we read : ' He was fond of money, but he was a man of strict probity, which was very pleasing to Napoleon ; it was the prime quality that he esteemed in a public man.'

In 1832 he had an attack of *la grippe* which affected his brain. He said one day to his *valet de chambre* : ' If M. de Robespierre comes, you will tell him that I am not at home.' And the *valet de chambre*, in his simplicity, passed on the order to another domestic. Robespierre was his nightmare and delirium in his last years, and he has been heard to say : ' Take away that infamous man !'

Having been denounced to the society of the Jacobins shortly before the 9 Thermidor, he was fond of relating how he was saved by his shoemaker, who rose and said : ' This Sieyès, I know him, he does not meddle with politics at all, he is always absorbed in his books : I make his boots, and I will be responsible for him.'

Strictly economical in respect of his own person, he was not as uncharitable as some have thought. He gave without show. His nephew and niece were very free in their liberalities, to which he was not a stranger.

In any one who studies him somewhat closely and is worthy of it, he inspires a profound curiosity, respect rather than sympathy. He reminds you of those words which are his own, but which in spite of all his lights he did not sufficiently verify by his own example : ' There is a knowledge which is in the soul as much as in the mind.' His memory however must gain considerably by the publication of his secret works and his papers :

in these Sieyès will appear not only a great intellectual power, but also as a man who long and sincerely desired to improve the lot of mankind.¹

¹ The death of M. Fortoul has destroyed the hope that we expressed in the above article. This indefinite postponement and perhaps final shelving of the promised Work on Sieyès must be a subject of regret to all lovers of knowledge and thought. Once again has he relapsed, and perhaps for ever, into the silence that he loved.

M. FIÉVÉE¹

Monday, 15 December 1851.

M. FIÉVÉE is not, I think, one of those men whose life need be written in detail, but he is one of those distinguished writers whose opinions and books merit attention. When he died, some twelve years ago, in May 1839, not sufficient notice was taken of him: two years before, in 1837, he had as it were settled his accounts with the public by publishing the Letters and Notes written by him, in the course of eleven years, to Bonaparte, First Consul and Emperor; to these he added an Introduction which is one of the best and most piquant bits of contemporary history. I read these volumes at the time with much profit and interest: on returning to them to-day, I will not seek in them any kind of allusions, but I am sure at least that they will not be out of season.

We will say a little however about M. Fiévée. Born at Paris on the 10 April 1767, the son of a rich *restaurateur* who kept besides a sumptuous *hôtel garni*, and of a very handsome mother, the seventh of sixteen children, he was able, from his earliest childhood, to obtain a near view of the pre-Revolutionary great world, his observations of which were the more valuable, because he was at the same time close to and outside of it: he saw it pass before him. He was brought up in the country at first, then at the Collège Mazarin in Paris; but, in spite of a good education, he is pleased to remark that he had after all only 'the instruction which he gave himself.' He did not share the prevailing feeling of adoration for the ancients or the classics; he was rather inclined to pride himself on being ignorant of them or of having forgotten them than of possessing them; a Latin quotation ap-

¹ *Correspondance et Relations avec Bonaparte*, 3 vols., 1837.

peared to him an incongruity. A true modern, he was directly moulded by social intercourse. He read, reflected, compared, and soon had his *little ideas* of his own.

Gifted with an imposing stature and physical qualities which he always regarded as an advantage, he was able, from his first steps, to cut a figure in the world by his bearing, his tranquil manners, by a presence which already proclaimed a decided character, by a number of views, 'the more original as most of them were without solution'; he enhanced them still more by a precise and novel turn of expression. He represents himself as being entirely destitute of any ambition, of any personal interest: 'My great fault, my imperturbable fault, is antipathy to movement.' His principle was that there are some faults which are good, and that it is only a question of making the best of them and arranging one's life in such a way as to make them contribute to one's happiness. He seems to have adapted himself very well to his own faults. He carried the idea of accommodating oneself to one's inclinations a long way, and he was heard to say, 'When a man has a vice, he must be able to carry it.'

Before being the man we knew, that is to say a sort of amateur in politics, seated in the orchestra stalls, criticising the play, and often even consulted by authors or actors, before settling down to his habit of observing the world 'as if it only moved for his edification,' M. Fiévée had his vivacities and passions: he was standing and active enough in the pit. At the beginning of the Revolution he had become a printer; he printed the *Chronique de Paris*, edited by Condorcet and others of his way of thinking, and when necessary he slipped in a few little articles of his own. Together with Berton he had composed a comic opera, *Les Rigueurs du Cloître* (August 1790), in the philosophical taste of the day. The subject is that of a nun who has been forced to take the vows, who is about to be punished by the Abbess for trying to violate them, and is released by her lover in the uniform of a grenadier of the National Guard and his whole company with the officer at their head. It winds up with a general chorus:

O Liberté, déesse de la France!
Plutôt mourir que de vivre sans toi ! . . .

M. Fiévée's enemies have often thrown in his teeth this

little sin of his youth. For his part, the experience of the Revolution quickly corrected him. He was repeatedly arrested, the first time in 1793, and soon released for want of charges and even of pretexts. He relates these arrests in a tone of ironical humour, which was not an after-thought but quite in accordance with his nature. The most violent opponent to his release from prison in '93 was a former very ignorant publisher, whom he had, eight or ten years previously, as printer's reader, detected in a few blunders, in the printing-office where he was serving his apprenticeship. This rancour of the bad speller came out after ten years of silence. M. Fiévée had been free for some months when, on the 9 Thermidor, obeying a courageous impulse, he induced his Section (that of the Odéon, called *Marat's Section*), before any other, to make an act of adhesion and join the Convention which had arisen against Robespierre. He was a club orator on that day, and he overcame a slight defect of pronunciation which was not disagreeable in conversation, but did not necessarily qualify him for a public speaker. *

Arrived at the bar of the Convention, which he found all in disorder, then admitted to the honours of a seat of which he took little advantage, he tells how a big, jovial Conventionnel said to him, on his leaving the assembly :

'Take the longest way round when you return to your constituents, and, whenever you pass a Section, go in ; speak of the mission you have just fulfilled, and the reception you have had. . . . Make a point of speaking of the assurance you have witnessed among us.'—'Certainly, I replied ; that will be a training for me if some day I try to write history !'

M. Fiévée was at all times the man who was least satisfied with the *conventional* solemnities and historical declamations. Somebody one day said to him that, in the order of his habitual political studies, he should read much history. 'Before I read it I must write it,' he said. His clever definition of politics is well known : 'Politics, even in representative Governments, is *what one does not say*.'

He formed a perfectly correct judgment of Robespierre and the supposed talent for speech with which he has been credited in our days ; it is one of those discoveries which cost the spirit of system nothing. And as to the *humborality* of the man, he said : 'He was surnamed the *them* *ruptible* ; he was indeed incorruptible, like the man *hes* to take everything at once.'

* *Corrapo.*

He has described with entire truth, as eye-witness and actor, the impetuous and confused activity, the exuberance of that group of young Thermidorians who knew what they did not want, but not yet what they wanted, who supported the Convention against Robespierre, and who thought to drive the Convention before a public opinion that was not yet ripe : ' Never perhaps, says Fiévée, was the old royalty more completely forgotten than at this period ; we were not yet sufficiently difficult to think of it.' For his own part, though naturally indolent, when once he has left his groove, he is precise, prudent, cautious, very bold on the days of action. Such he appeared on the 13 Vendémiaire, such he was again during the months preceding the 18 Fructidor, ' a cool factionist who was thoroughly conscious of what he was doing.' Forced to leave Paris in Vendémiaire, he gives a very witty description of his flight and the various incidents of his journey in the *patuche* of those days, the primitive open-air *patache* in all its original rusticity : ' I have seen others since then, he says, but they have been corrupted by the invading luxury ; they are covered.' The dialogues which enliven the way are excellent scenes of everyday life. Having reached Moulins, in the provinces, he soon becomes aware that he is beyond reach of the proscription : he might have shown himself openly, but that it appeared to him a kind of bravado, and consequently a lack of good breeding : ' But, he adds, one must be polite, even with revolutions.' The reader has no doubt already caught the delicately ironical, epigrammatic and lightly impertinent tone, even in serious things : it has the merit of concealing much good sense and many correct views.

Retired into the country, at Buzancy, after the 18 Fructidor, M. Fiévée had the happy idea of amusing himself with the writing of *La Dot de Suzette, ou Histoire de Madame de Senneterre racontée par elle-même* (year VI), one of those little novels which, in France, bring a sedate man into repute more quickly than twenty serious pamphlets. M. Fiévée thinks that, but for the Revolution, he would have confined himself principally to the writing of novels, and that he would have had enough imagination for that task, but that the Revolution, by substituting for the imagination the passions of the spirit and the

tendency to reflect which they produce, altered his destination. Be that as it may, *La Dot de Suzette* was a lucky fortnight in his life.

To explain the success and the vogue of this little book, it must be remembered that the public were beginning to weary of the monstrous English novels in the style of Anne Radcliffe, which had been succeeding each other for three or four years, and in which underground passages, ghosts and chains played a great part. The public, after being greatly enamoured of them, were only awaiting an occasion to throw them aside. *La Dot de Suzette*, which appeared to be merely a true anecdote, told with interest and delicacy by a woman (for the first edition was anonymous), satisfied that desire for a more simple taste. A lady of society, Madame de Senneterre, having, in the time of her wealth, dowered a young orphan peasant girl, and married her in haste to a man of the lower classes, in order to prevent her son, who was in love with her, from marrying her, is ruined by the Revolution and obliged to go into service herself. She is provided with a letter of recommendation to a rich young woman who is seeking a sort of companion, and is about to present herself. The moment when Madame de Senneterre obtains the letter of recommendation, her involuntary astonishment when she turns it over mechanically in her hands, her uneasiness with regard to the reception that is in store for her, and the toilet befitting the humbleness of her present condition, all this is copied from nature and should remind more than one lady reader of similar too real and too recent circumstances :

' Worn out with the fatigue of trying to make up my mind, related Madame de Senneterre, I went to bed. Not a moment's sleep. A girl on the eve of being presented at Court could not have been more anxious about her toilet than I was. I was afraid of arousing pity ; I was still more afraid of being unable to tone down an air of dignity which nature and the habit of commanding had given me. Especially did I dread being unable to bear resignedly the questions I was to expect. Daylight surprised me, without my having come to any determination . . .

The reader will have guessed that the rich lady before whom Madame de Senneterre was to appear, is no other than Suzette, who has changed her name. I emphasise this passage as being the most really touching, nay the only naturally touching, passage in the book. We find

in it some truthful scenes besides, in which are depicted the gross and licentious manners of the wealthy contractors and other parvenus, and of the women who run after them. There is a certain concert at the Salle Feydeau, which serves as a framework to a series of satirical portraits. Beyond that, in the sentimental part, the novel is not free from the faults and the mannerisms of the period. The principal characters are *virtuous, susceptible, interesting*, and we have to do with a human nature such as we find at the Opéra-Comique or the Gymnase, not with true and sincere nature. In a word, *La Dot de Suzette* is not a master-work, but it was a very agreeable book in its day.

How often this little novel was recalled to M. Fiévée's memory and cast in his teeth in the course of his career! In the first interview he had with Bonaparte, the master made a graceful allusion to it. On the other hand, those men who argue from what a man of wit has done that he is unable to do anything else, those men, under the Empire, never failed, when anybody spoke to them about M. Fiévée's serious writings and his political views, to repeat: 'Ah! yes, the author of *La Dot de Suzette*!'—'It was to be feared, says the author slyly, that they would entail it upon me.'

Another novel of M. Fiévée, more carefully worked out but not so agreeable, is *Frédéric* (year VIII). Frédéric is a young man, the son of a grand lady already advanced in years and of a young and handsome *valet de chambre*: it savours of the Directoire period on every page. There are some rather fine scenes however, showing true observation and analysis, when the young man, who is ignorant of his birth, first appears in the house of his benefactress, and the latter looks upon him with love, jealousy and shame, whilst the father, who is standing respectfully behind her, regards him with pride. The analysis of these various complicated and conflicting feelings with regard to the mysterious son, the three situations of the mother, the son and the father, are distinguished with a rare delicacy and indicated with a sureness of touch which, though rather hard, shows care and observation. The novel terminates with a note of sadness. Philippe (that is the name of the *valet de chambre*, who, independently of all his qualities, is studious,

well educated and fond of reading), Philippe, retired from service and living with his son, has contracted the habit of casting his thoughts on paper; and when somebody one day proposed to him to publish them: 'No, truly, he replied, I should fear to betray the secrets of humanity; one who knows men feels the need of concealing them.'

About the time when, living in retirement in Champagne and safe from proscription, he was writing his *Dot de Suzette*, he received a visit in secret from King Louis XVIII, who had distinguished him among the journalists of the period before the 18 Fructidor. M. Becquey came to propose to him to attach himself to the service of the exiled King by some correspondence, and M. Fiévée, like M. Royer-Collard at the time, consented. This correspondence ceased shortly after the epoch of the 18 Brumaire. M. Fiévée, who was a Royalist only by opinion, and who was not necessarily attached to any persons, seeing a firm Government being inaugurated through the ascendancy of a single man, closed his connection with the exiles, and held himself ready to serve or to advise the new power.

Bonaparte, who, at this hour of social formation, was on the look-out everywhere for men, good tools or useful informers, had his eye on M. Fiévée. While M. Roederer pointed him out to the First Consul, Fouché was trying to get him out of the way. Fouché, who did not like him and was trying to injure him, contrived to implicate him in some affair, and imprisoned him in the Temple. But the imprisonment brought about a happy result, and when it was ended M. Fiévée entered into personal and direct relations with the Consul. 'To put a stop to secret insinuations, he hastened to give him public pledges of his adherence. In a pamphlet which he published at the time under the title: *Du 18 Brumaire opposé au Système de la Terreur* (1802), he laid down a principle which could not give displeasure: 'If Terrorism, he said, was only destructive madness, the military spirit was on the other hand, at every epoch of the Revolution, a means of preservation.' Between the Convention and the Directoire M. Fiévée made no other distinction but that between *killing* and *letting die*. Contrasting the Directoire with the triumphs of our armies, he said:

'No party can rule over a country covered with glory and ignominy, when all the ignominy is on its side. States in revolution are not saved by Constitutions, but by men.' We may see what he is aiming at in this pamphlet. When afterwards, under the Restoration (1817), it was brought up against him by his political and constitutional adversaries, he remarked that he had never cried up the *military Government*, but the *military spirit*, which was a very different thing, and he took shelter behind M. de Bonald's *mot*: 'Nations end in the bou-doirs, they recommence in the camps.'¹

Although he was only once mentioned in this pamphlet, Bonaparte understood very well that it was entirely dedicated to him; he summoned M. Fiévée to the Tuileries, showed himself 'simple, witty, coquettish and trustful,' as he knew how to be when he desired to win a person over, and the interview ended in his sending him to England, with orders to observe that country, with which we were newly at peace, and to write to him about it. It was a political term of probation to which he subjected M. Fiévée before putting him to a nearer test. The outcome of this visit was the *Lettres sur l'Angleterre* (1802), in which the author, whilst combating the prevailing anglomania and all its consequences, inserts some very strong and cutting reflections on the philosophy of the eighteenth century: he considered and denounced it as antipathetic to all social institutions and hostile to every stable principle of government. Judging from the manner in which he criticised Rousseau, Voltaire, Mably, Raynal, Helvétius and *tutti quanti*, he revealed a mind that was singularly free from all superstitious regard for the great and illustrious literary names: 'Happy, he said at the conclusion, happy are those who have not closed their eyes to events, to open them on books only!'

On his return from England, after an interview with Bonaparte, M. Fiévée received through the intervention of M. de Lavalette an invitation to write to him in a series of Notes his impressions and views on events

¹ M. Fiévée added: 'It will be the same with nations which persist in ending in the *bureaux*' (the ministerial bureaux of the Directoire); and we might similarly say of the nations which persist in parliamentary intrigues, that they have a way of ending in the *corridors*.

and things. When, in 1837, he publishes these Notes or reports which he rather improperly entitles *Correspondence*, M. Fiévée is unable to resist a feeling of what we must call conceit. In our eyes he puts himself too much on a footing of equality with the man he is informing and with whom he is talking: 'The contents of this Correspondence was unknown, he says, but its existence was known; he made no concealment of it, no more than I did. That would have been impossible, even if we had desired it.' This *we* recurs more often than it should. Nothing was more simple and natural than that M. Fiévée, when talking with Bonaparte, should display all his intelligence and use it in all freedom and frankness. A man should never efface himself before another man, and especially when his intelligence is being consulted. But dignity does not consist in so carefully maintaining and concerting, in prefaces and narratives, that semblance of equality which is more than ever impossible when writing thirty years after, and before the majesty of history. On this point M. Fiévée sinned against that good taste which should be inspired by a sense of respect and proportions.

The first parts of these Notes are, it may be remarked, full of excellent observations and views which the head of a State might have profited by. At this period, the morrow of Brumaire, when everything is on its trial and everything is beginning anew, M. Fiévée describes society to the First Consul as it really is at bottom, weary, exhausted, clinging to a precarious hope as soon as a few good symptoms reappear: 'It may be said of a people that has entered upon the course of revolutions, that after being wearied with ideas and hopes, it falls back heavily under the yoke of its needs.' He shows how this situation is favourable to every rising power, but very difficult to control:

'The Revolution having exaggerated all the hopes of the people and produced only a greater discomfort, the people, ever duped by those who exalt them, expected so much from their flatterers that one cannot do for them anything like as much as they have been promised.

'They hope however that every succeeding Government will realise the happiness which has been dangled before their eyes. So, a week after the general Peace (the Peace of Amiens), the people in Paris were already asking themselves what good would result from it. Such is the people which the Revolution has formed.'

For his own part, he appears before the Consul as the representative and the mouthpiece of the old conservative forces of society, by antagonism to the purely revolutionary forces and interests. Bonaparte was surrounded by men of the Revolution whom he was by turns pacifying or curbing; in spite of the influence of these men and the considerations that are due to them, M. Fiévée urges the Government as soon as possible to condemn openly all false principles. The scandal which arose at Saint-Roch over the refusal to bury the remains of Mademoiselle Chameroi the dancer, furnished him with an opportunity to make some political remarks relatively to religion: 'It will long need to be sustained more than contained,' he said. He states very ably the difference between those two supports of the *ancien régime*, the nobility which is really ended, and the religious establishment which must be transformed and kept up. With regard to the nobility, the great proof of its having ceased to exist as a privileged body, and of the triumph of equality, is 'this truth, which is less disputable to-day than it ever was: *There is not a person who is not ready to receive money.* Now, in every country where unpaid service has ceased to exist, there is real *political equality* in spite of pretensions and memories.' But this actual truth does not prevent his remarking that the public mind very naturally keeps up a religious sense of the past: 'Men whose names appear in history, who are connected with the whole past of a nation, are never nullities in their country.'

In all these preliminary Notes, M. Fiévée urges the First Consul to adopt a rallying policy. He thinks it highly important that the powers should keep in touch with public opinion; he insists 'on the necessity of nursing it, of making some efforts to win it.' He was himself at this period a very good and reliable guide to consult on that wise opinion. Constantly urging the restoration of the old principles, he anticipates an objection which he knows must be raised against him. The erstwhile Revolutionaries ranged around the First Consul denounced these monarchical tendencies as leading directly to a restoration of the Bourbons; M. Fiévée denies that to be a necessary consequence: 'It would be very extraordinary, he says, if fourteen centuries

of monarchy should serve no other end in France but to raise opposition to the Government of an individual.' He points out that between this return to the true principles of government and a return to the *ancien régime*, there is always an enormous interposing obstacle, namely the mass of interests created by the Revolution. He describes Royalism such as it was henceforth in this society that was becoming more and more a matter of fact :

'Nowadays, Royalism is neither a passion nor an enthusiasm, still less a fanaticism : it is an opinion ; and the men who only act in accordance with an opinion that has been perverted by all the crises in which we have been actors and victims, do not sacrifice the tranquillity of their lives to projects which they feel it to be beyond their power to carry out.'

That is the general sense of the observations which M. Fiévée offered and amplified on every occasion to Bonaparte. Unless we are to suppose that he added to or arranged this Correspondence for publication, it was really meritorious in him to have said to the First Consul, when urging him to spare himself in order to successfully accomplish his whole destiny : 'The men of our days do not resemble the famous men of Antiquity, who only shook the world and left it to recover as best it could.' In its first pages this Correspondence summarises all that is honourable and noteworthy in the life of M. Fiévée.

He is far from dissuading Bonaparte from his plan of rallying and absorbing the old Conventionnels and revolutionaries, as long as they are not allowed to exercise any influence :

'It should be said of the First Consul that, if he fattens the old philosophers and the old revolutionaries, he does so to make them harmless, as the Greek athletes were obliged to give up fighting when they became too stout.'

Anxious about the coming generations, he is one of the first to advise the gathering together of the debris of the old University, and utilising them for the benefit of the youth of the country who are given over to charlatans and brought up in a haphazard way. He calls attention, at this date, to the absence of all rule and guidance in the schools of the Government : 'Considering merely the results, we should find that the Government

to-day pays for the instruction of men who will become more and more difficult to govern.' All these ideas of M. Fiévée were only hints which required a more authoritative head to co-ordinate and fertilise.

As we are content to read him without seeking any more than clear and delicate sketches, we might pick out a number of thoughts that are worth remembering. A certain Herr Graner or Grauer of Berlin, a gentleman with Utopian ideas, projected an association having the purpose of assuring neither more nor less than *the prosperity and security of all the States of Europe*, and he had come to Paris to carry out his idea. M. Fiévée, who knows the world, is afraid of even the maddest ideas, as likely to affect the brains of the people :

'It has become so common, he says, to excite the minds of the people by grand projects and incredible discoveries, that if the newspapers were to announce to-morrow that a man has discovered the secret of recreating the world on quite a new plan, half Europe would believe the miracle, and rise up to hasten its accomplishment.'

So this plan of the Berliner causes him a certain anxiety :

'If the light French heads succeed in finding a point of contact with the hollow German heads, it will assuredly need a cosmopolitan society to govern Europe ; the chiefs of the nation will no longer suffice.'

Pointing out the danger of free societies and the Clubs which, originating in England and causing no trouble in the land of their origin, are the source of much trouble in ours :

'The establishment of Clubs in France, he says, preceded the Revolution by a few years. To become excited, men only need a place where they may meet together : when they have found it, they will defy, they will dominate public opinion. . . . The heroes of these gatherings too often end by being more fond of the human race than of their country, more fond of their systems than of the human race. The enthusiasm of a man may be easily combated ; the enthusiasm which takes hold of a number of men gathered together, whatever its object may be, defies ridicule and almost always fascinates the multitude.'

On this subject of ridicule he has some shrewd observations which show the real moralist. It used to be said at one time that in France nobody could resist ridicule ; in this respect we have greatly changed since then : 'Can there be any ridicule, indeed, when manners have ceased to be fixed ? *Ridicule would to-day be a means of success if it helped a man to rise above the crowd.*'

Defining the then prevailing influence, the twofold inverse, but equally dangerous influence of Rousseau and Voltaire, he says :

'As the French live on two equally dangerous opinions, the one formed by an eloquent writer who has magnified everything that is little, the other formed by a scoffing writer who has taken a pleasure in belittling everything that is great, we must carefully avoid both routes, to recreate public opinion and return, as in the olden time, to simplicity and seriousness.'

In one place he appraises and quotes the *market price*, so to say, of Voltaire's reputation, which rises or falls according as society is in a normal condition or in a vein of fault-finding humour :

'Voltaire was truly the intellectual head of Europe during the eighteenth century. To fascinate a society in dissolution, needed wit, irony, immorality rather than deep or dogmatic reasoning. This writer will fall in proportion as serious things resume the ascendant, and as long as society is well governed ; but whenever it enters into opposition against the Government, whatever that Government may be, Voltaire will recover all his influence, because he is very amusing to read for the discontented.'

This kind of law that governs Voltaire's reputation has been sufficiently verified hitherto : he rose very high under the Restoration, and at the present moment, since people have realised what opposition and Fronde lead to, he is low. I may mention that I have no intention of endorsing these passages which I quote : I am only endeavouring, as I always do, to analyse my author in such a way as to show up his best sides, leaving it to the reader to cast the balance and give his decision.

Not all the parts of this Correspondence are equally interesting and worthy of mention. In his expression M. Fiévée is sometimes subtle and twisted, and consequently obscure. The Correspondence falls off a little as it advances ; it illustrates the disadvantage of being no more than a man of wit. In his character as correspondent of the Emperor he becomes a little pretentious and professional. In short, instead of the freedom of the early years, the author becomes *classed* in the hierarchy ; he becomes Master of Requests, Prefect. So the most truly remarkable Notes are those which he wrote from 1802 to 1804.

M. Fiévée had a liking and a special faculty for correspondence. At the time of the first Restoration, in

1814, he keeps up a correspondence of the same kind with the Comte de Blacas, the Minister and favourite of Louis XVIII. We are sorry to observe that the First Consul, to whom he had had the merit of writing with so much good sense, and who did him the honour of lending ear to him, is here almost insulted by being called *Bonaparte* instead of *Bonaparte*. In 1814, and especially in 1815, M. Fiévée was seized with a more violent fit of Royalism than that which he suffered under the Directoire. On the pretext of always desiring the same fundamental things, such as the institution of communal liberties which he opposes to the administrative Monarchy, he entered into all the violent party passions and aggressions. He always brought to them a deal of wit, a tone of cool and piquant reason, a grain of humour, of pleasantness and even impertinence in his reasoning, which contrasted with the furious anger of those around him. He carried on the war as one of the most active volunteers in the *Conservateur*, under the banner of M. de Chateaubriand. He was proceeded against in 1818, and condemned to an imprisonment of several months, which he spent in a private hospital. He lacked none of the qualities which at that time characterised a gentlemanly Royalist, and stopped in time to be able afterwards to reappear as a Constitutional Liberal. Since he always prided himself so much on his independence and his indolence, there is no doubt that some of the causes which made him act and vary at the time, have escaped our ken: we will confine ourselves to his ideas as a whole.

M. Fiévée belonged to that enlightened bourgeoisie which might be called the Royalist *tiers-état*. He preferred the monarchical form as affording greater security to society. Judging the nobility with indifference, without envying them, without either hating or loving them, he began to serve their cause very actively during these first years of the Restoration. Did he, a man of the pen and a dialectician, aspire to be the publicist, the mouthpiece, the intellectual and approved leader of that provincial nobility who were not represented in the Press? Such a supposition would not do him any wrong; on the question of administrative centralisation and the self-government of the Communes he had a

theory which came very natural to that army of provincial noblemen. But at one time, at the time when the ultra-Royalist party of which he was one of the free leaders, rose to power with MM. Villèle and Corbière, M. Fiévée became aware that he had been working for others, and that the Ministry was falling under the domination of a political coterie and a religious society, with whom he had little chance of finding a hearing and of being estimated at his right value. 'Those people imagine that we are palisades,' he said of the men who had ranged themselves behind him in the fray, and went their way after the victory was won.

M. Fiévée therefore followed the example of several influential members of the Royalist party headed by M. de Chateaubriand; he turned. He called to mind that deep saying of the Cardinal de Retz, 'that one is often obliged to change one's opinion in order to remain with one's party.' He, on the other hand, changed his party, apparently in order to remain true to the bulk of his opinions. He passed over into a coalition with the Liberals, with the Benjamin Constants, the Casimir Périers, and finally we see him contributing to the *Temps* newspaper with M. Coste, and even to the *National* under Carrel.

In judging the policy, as absurd as it was ungrateful in his opinion, which had split and alienated the Royalists about 1823, he said: 'I have never been very severe upon meannesses of the human heart, I know it too well for that, but I can never pardon meanness when it is unintelligent and stupid.' He ended by becoming completely detached from persons in the matter of government, and cared only, as he said, for the people: 'The people advance, not because they are governed, but in spite of being governed.'

The best moment of his Royalism was when he came in the mornings into M. de Chateaubriand's cabinet at the Foreign Affairs: there he would meet M. Bertin the elder and several other intimate friends. Stretched on a sofa (while M. de Chateaubriand was supposed to be working), M. Fiévée would give vent to his whole vein. He sought and found many smart, shrewd, epigrammatic words to fit the situation, many of those convenient and expressive definitions which went the

round and were repeated, which he would himself repeat. When listening to him, it was easy to see that he was very fond of wit ; it was what he liked best in the world.

After 1830, in his last and quite disinterested form, in what I may call his quasi-Republican form, he was the same. Every morning he needed to have his opinion, his word on things, and to give utterance to it : he was like the thermometer which cannot help marking the temperature. That was his manner of being and producing. When his reflections did not attain the volume of a pamphlet, he needed a newspaper into which to pour his stream and his overflow, 'to confound, as he said, his thoughts of the moment with the circumstances of the moment.' Towards the end it was not all equally telling ; it had to be sorted, and he was not sorry that another should do the sorting. From inclination and habit he was more of a journalist than a consultant : 'As a writer, he said, if I had to choose between the public and a sovereign, though he were ten times as exalted as the column of the Place Vendôme, I should never hesitate to prefer the public ; it is they who are our real masters.'

Leaving in the shade his weak sides and what is outside the sphere of memory, and considering him in his entirety and his intellectual form, I find him thus defined by myself in a note written no less than fifteen years ago :

'Fiévée, publicist, moralist, observer, cool-headed writer, pointed and mordant, very distinguished ; a male Pauline de Meulan (without her moral worth) ; without freshness of imagination, but with a sort of charm sometimes by dint of delicate wit ;—one of those subordinate men who have influence, born counsellors implicated in many things, in too many things, better than their reputation, escaping too great evils and extreme corruption through their love of independence, a certain relative moderation in their desires, and their indolence ;—working for the newspapers from inclination rather than necessity, loving to guide public opinion, even though the public is unaware of it ;—moderate Machiavellis, deserving the name on account of their cool, firm, and shrewd outlook ; liberal in their results rather than generous in their principles ;—having a wonderful understanding of modern society, of modern education through society, not through books ; no knowledge of the Ancients, nor of the classics, no taste for form, for beauty in style, no grandiose morality, no thought for fame, nothing of that, but an understanding of things, a clear, precise, positive view, sensible, useful, and piquant observation, a witty and applicable turn of ideas ; not a love of the true, but a certain justness and a pleasure in seeing things as they are and imparting them ; an eye quick and sure to seize in every conjuncture the measure of the possible ; a disinterested ease in entering into the spirit of a situation,

and pointing out its difficulties and possibilities : valuable people, with whom every Government should love to talk or correspond, to hear their opinion after or before every crisis.'

That is still my idea of M. Fiévée, a little embellished perhaps, but like ; that is the impression he makes especially upon one who knows him only through his Correspondence with Bonaparte.

THE CARDINAL DE RETZ

II

Monday, 22 December 1851.

I SHOULD like to return to the Cardinal de Retz and his Memoirs, on which I have already spoken.¹ It astonished me that anybody should have regarded them chiefly as an incitation to disturbance and seditious intrigues; if rightly read, they should rather be considered as a deterrent. But each one reads with his humour and his imagination rather than with his judgment, and the narrative is fascinating, although the things he tells of are very unpleasant, and the narrator, after the first moment of enthusiasm is passed, does not try to embellish them.

We will not confine ourselves to the beginning of Retz' Memoirs, as many writers have done: ~~we will go~~ farther and follow the clever factionist beyond that honeymoon of the Fronde. What entanglements! what impossible situations! what wretched, disgraceful actions! On the day after the Barricades, when the Queen, the young King, Mazarin and all the Court have once fled from Paris (January 1649), what will this Coadjutor do, this tribune of the people, this master of the pavement, with his allies, on the one hand the Parliament, that uncontrollable machine, and on the other the princes of the blood and the grandees of the kingdom (the Bouillons, the Contis, the Longuevilles) who have involved themselves in the faction with quite personal views?

Among the numerous pamphlets published at this date, there is one which is rather curious and has an official look, entitled: *Contrat de Mariage du Parlement*

¹ See *infra*, page 31.

avec la Ville de Paris. It is a sort of Charter in the form of a contract, and drawn up in the style of a notary. We read in it the wish and the programme of these first moments. *In the name of God the Creator*, it is announced 'that the illustrious and wise Lord the Parliament of Paris herewith takes for his wife and lawful spouse the puissant and good Lady the City of Paris, as likewise the said Lady takes, etc., etc., to be, the said Lord and Lady, joined and united perpetually and indissolubly.' The conjoined promise, to that effect, to be henceforth 'one and common in all their desires, actions, passions and interests generally whatsoever,' the whole for the greatest good of the State and the preservation of the King and the kingdom. There follows a list of the principal articles agreed upon by the contracting parties :

'That God shall be ever served and honoured, feared and loved as he should.

'That atheistic, impious, libertine and sacrilegious persons shall be exemplarily punished and immediately exterminated.

'That vices, sins and scandals shall be corrected as far as shall be possible, etc.

'That the good of the State and the preservation of the King and Kingdom, "tc., etc.'

I cut it short. But after these first articles, which are there for show and parade, come the others which are more essential, to wit, that during the tender age of the young King, the Parliament of Paris shall propose, for the government of the State, illustrious persons, drawn from the orders of the clergy, the nobility and the judicial bench, who shall be, after the princes of the blood, the natural counsellors and ministers of the Regency. In a word, the conclusion of the 'succeeding articles is that the Parliament shall govern during the minority; that when it shall demand the dismissal of any minister or counsellor, it shall meet with no opposition; that an exemplary reform shall be introduced into the management of the finances, the distribution of benefices, the nomination to offices, and the imposition and levy of taxes; in brief, 'that the poor people shall be really and effectively relieved, that order shall be restored in all things, and the reign of Justice fully re-established in all the provinces of the kingdom.'

The necessary conclusion aimed at by the pamphlet

is that, Cardinal Mazarin being incompatible with this golden age and this reign of Justice on earth, 'he shall be immediately prosecuted until he be brought into the hands of Justice to be publicly and exemplarily executed.'

The final clause is according to the formula .

'For thus have promised and sworn the said Lord Parliament and the said Lady City of Paris on the Holy Gospels, before the Church of Our Lady, in the month of January of the year one thousand six hundred and forty-nine, and have signed.'

It was Retz in person who, in his capacity of Coadjutor, gave the benediction to this famous marriage which was proposed under such magnificent auspices ; but what did he think of it himself ?

In the very first weeks, we may see the idea he formed of the real state of the party from the very fine and very serious conversations which he held with the Duc de Bouillon, Turenne's eldest brother, and the best brain among all those grandees who had joined the faction. Retz, who knows better than anybody his Paris household, lays bare before the Duc de Bouillon all the divisions and the probable causes of ruin : 'The bulk of the people who are firm, he says, prevents us from yet seeing this *handlelessness* of the parts.' But he for his part feels that this *handlelessness* will very soon appear if they are not on their guard, and he puts his finger on it in his words, which are better than his deeds. Less than six weeks after the coming into play of the first Fronde, he said so forcibly : 'The people are weary some time before they become aware of it. Hatred of Mazarin sustains and covers this lassitude. We amuse their minds by our satires, our verses, our songs ; the noise of the trumpets, drums and timbals, the sight of the flags and banners delight the shops ; but do they really pay the taxes with the same punctuality as in the first weeks ?' The taxes, that is the delicate point to which they must always return as soon as they try to establish any order on the morrow of a revolt, and the first cry of every revolt is that it is organised in the name of a relief that is generally impossible.

Retz expounds to the Duc de Bouillon his whole policy under the first Fronde, and we must do him this justice

that, if he was a sedition-monger, he was only half a one. He has made himself master of the people, in concert with M. de Beaufort, whom he has in his power and who is only a shadow; he is the idol of the parish-ioners as the other is the idol of the market-place. But he will not abuse 'this infatuation of the people for M. de Beaufort and for me.' He is absolutely opposed to the idea of dispensing with the Parliament or of crushing it through the people, of violently *purging* it as some advise. These methods of the time of the League arouse his horror; he leaves them to the Sixteen and to sanguinary men of ambition. He holds them no less in horror than he does Cromwell, whose advances he repels, as he is at all times repugnant to a close and entire union with Spain. Not that he disguises the secret dispositions of Parliament and the methods of that assembly: in spite of those grand words which are spoken on the great days, 'at the back of the mind of Parliament is the idea of peace, and they never depart from it but by fits and starts,' which are quickly followed by remorse. He knows that that assembly, a slave to rules and forms, can think of no warfare but one of decrees and process-servers; that the greatest thunders of eloquence end in resolutions to institute commissions of enquiry and to issue decrees of denunciation; that nothing would prevent Parliament from rising when the hours of noon or five o'clock, the sacramental dinner and supper times, have struck. Though Retz might have the *lanternes*, that is to say the tribunes, on his side, though he had the young men of brains of the Parliament, the bench of Enquiries who were quite devoted to him: this *holy crowd*, as he calls it, which can shout so well when it has the watchword, does not suffice, and First President Molé will not do his bidding. What Retz would wish, to act on the mind of the Parliament, to stimulate without oppressing it, is an army, not in Paris, but outside the walls, a real army at the disposal of the Fronde; he was ready to exclaim like the Abbé Sieyès: *I need a sword*. For a moment he thought he had found it in M. de Turenne; he might have made a worse choice; but it failed him. He thinks that an army at a little distance and a general of renown might act at the right moment on the Parliament and, without threatening

it, restore to it the necessary energy, whilst the action of the People at Paris is too dangerous, too immediate. Retz, though he might dispose of the people, fears to employ them, for this kind of blind force strikes before giving warning: 'That, he remarks, is the fate and the misfortune of popular powers. They are only believed in when they are felt, and it is very often to the interest and even to the honour of those who control them, to make them less felt than believed in.'

The other disadvantages of a civil war that one has oneself kindled, Retz confesses without any reserve: one of the first articles of the marriage contract between the Parliament and the City of Paris was, as we have seen, that atheists and libertines were to be put down and punished; but it was just one of the surest effects of the Fronde to unchain this libertinism, which is fatal to every state of things that one tries to establish and consolidate. Speaking of the dissipations of Fonttraille, Matha and other free-thinkers: 'The table songs, he says, did not always spare the good God; I cannot tell you how all these follies pained me. The First President (Molé) was very well able to denounce them, the people by no means approved of them, the priests were scandalised by them to the last degree. I could not conceal them, I dared not excuse them, and they necessarily fell to the account of the Fronde.' And further: 'It was to our interest not to suppress the ~~libels~~ and the vaudevilles which were composed against the Cardinal, but it was no less to our interest to suppress those which were written against the Queen, and sometimes even against religion and the State. One cannot imagine the trouble that was given us on that point by these overheated spirits.' Thus were observed the first articles of the marriage contract. In short, every page in Retz' Memoirs confirms this truth, 'that the greatest misfortune of a civil war is that one is made responsible even for the mischief one does not do.'

And, once engaged in it, one is even obliged to do mischief. On more than one occasion Retz is compromised and almost discredited among the people and the enthusiasts in Parliament, by opposing absurd measures or acts of rapine or vandalism, such as the sale of Cardinal Mazarin's library. He is quickly obliged to correct these

good impulses by making in his turn some very extravagant proposal; which shows very naturally, he says, 'the extravagance of such times, when all the fools become mad, and the most sensible are not permitted to speak and act wisely.'

After the first Fronde had calmed down, and before the second broke out, Retz seems to have had momentary and sincere intentions of amending, of again becoming a respectable man and a faithful subject; but his past reputation weighed him down as much as the habits he had contracted, and soon involved him again in the paths of sedition. He was mistrusted at Court, and the result of this suspicion was to provoke him again to justify the mistrust. In all his relations with the Queen Anne of Austria Retz' position was similar to that of Mirabeau in his relations with Queen Marie-Antoinette. He felt that they did not rely upon him, that they only had recourse to him on occasions of necessity; he would have been the man to appreciate generous conduct on the part of the Queen and even of Mazarin, since it was one of his chief grievances against the latter that with all his intellectual qualities he absolutely lacked generosity and soul, and that, imagining others to be like himself, he did not think that anybody could give him disinterested advice.

Like Mirabeau, Retz could only render the Queen any services by maintaining his influence with the multitude; and, to maintain this influence, he was obliged to do acts ostensibly and to deliver speeches which savoured of sedition, and which seemed inversely to be pledges that he had taken. It was too easy to turn them against him at Court and to present him in the light of a traitor and backslider, at the very moment when he was only employing the means at his disposal for a hidden but better purpose.

At the numerous conferences he had by night at the Palais-Royal and elsewhere with the Queen, it is to be believed that in those mysterious oratories, in which she received him in order to confer more freely, he tried whether he could not interest the woman in her; that he often looked at her beautiful hands, of which Madame de Motteville has told us; that he sometimes put on an absent and dreamy look even when discussing ques-

tions of politics ; but the Queen's coquetry was not caught by this manœuvre ; her heart was fixed. Retz felt that he should never be able to dislodge Mazarin. But he was, it appears, rather slow to perceive it, and he continued to act outside as if there had been a hope of finally ousting him. A jest which had escaped him against the Queen, and which came to her ears (he had called her *Suisse*) angered the woman in her, and contributed more perhaps to the final vengeance than Retz' merely political infidelities might have done.

He always denied that he had aspired to the Ministry, and the reasons he gives are forcible and striking, if not convincing. To one of the advances, whether true or no, which were made to him, he replied ' that he was very incapable of being a minister for all sorts of reasons, and that it was not consistent with the dignity of the Queen to raise to that office a man who was *still hot and quite smoking, so to say, with faction.*' In another place he commits himself, on this point, with an accent of truth which should be much more calculated to impress us : it was at the end of the second Fronde, in which his behaviour was so different from what it had been in the first ; but he was still pursued by that first reputation for armed ambition : ' Is it possible, people would say who imagined him to be aiming at the Ministry, is it possible that the Cardinal de Retz is not content with being, at his age (he was thirty-seven), Cardinal and Archbishop of Paris ? And how can he have got it into his head that the foremost place in the King's Councils may be won by force of arms ? '—' I know, he adds, that the miserable gazettes (which treat) of those times are still full of these ridiculous ideas.' And he shows that he was then very far from cherishing such ideas, ' I mean not only by the force of reason because of the combinations of circumstances, but also *through my own inclinations which carried me so rapidly in the direction of pleasure and fame. . . .*' He concludes that the Ministry was still less to his liking than within his reach : ' I know not whether this should be regarded as my apology, he wrote addressing Madame de Caumartin ; I do not think at least that it is to my praise.'

This glory, this point of honour that Retz is always speaking of, and which he experienced in his way, was

a certain popular reputation, the favour and love of the public, to keep his pledges to his friends, not to appear to yield to a purely direct interest; towards the end, his whole doctrine of resistance seems to have been little more than a wager of honour against Mazarin.

The second Fronde (1650-1652) broke out, as we know, in the name of the Princes of the house of Condé whom Mazarin had imprisoned, and whom he was obliged to restore to liberty. In this second period of troubles, the Cardinal de Retz, very far from being an agitator and a firebrand, as generally supposed, is rather a negotiator and a little-regarded moderator. Monsieur, Duke of Orleans, Lieutenant-General of the kingdom, had conceived a great confidence for him and made him his familiar adviser. But when we remember Monsieur's character, timid, mistrustful, dissembling, changing his opinion several times a day, beginning to whistle when he was at a loss what to say, and using all his wit to hide his cowardice by subterfuges, we shall understand Retz' daily perplexities and embarrassments. Monsieur's weakness had many degrees and many *stages*, he says, and he counts and measures them one by one: 'It was a very long way with him from the *wish* to the *will*, from the *will* to the *resolution*, from the *resolution* to the *choice of means*, and from the *choice of means* to the *application*. But what was more extraordinary, it very often happened that he stopped short *in the middle of the application*.' Situated between a prince of this nature and the Parliament, that other complicated machine which was no less hopelessly difficult to move, playing second fiddle in the party to the Prince de Condé, who was his enemy at that time and whose triumph he cannot desire, Retz wastes his energies for two years in parleys, shifts, perpetual attempts to create a *third party* which are always abortive. How many wise maxims he scatters along the path to no purpose! How many penetrating glances on the truth of the situations and the helplessness of the parties! How often he has occasion to exclaim on leaving the sittings of Parliament: 'Nothing is more plebeian than the High Courts of Parliament! . . . The wisest appeared as mad as the people, and the people appeared to me madder than ever.' The humour of certain parts of his narrative can only partially

conceal his disgust at this lawless, contradictory government, which those who were immersed in it, with a blindness that is only too common, did not perceive.

Retz, whom nothing of this escapes, is often nauseated by it, and we wonder, on reading him, how it happened that he was not some fine morning driven by a good impulse, some fit of strong good sense and uprightness, were it only a fit of impatience and weariness, to break once for all with that inextricable complication of intrigues, henceforth without aim or issue. It is here that the vices of the man come into account, for here they found their reckoning. Though he was capable of condemning the things he despised, Retz did not hate the dice-box and the gambling hell. This disorderly and dissolute life had become a habit. Every evening the Hôtel de Chevreuse, or some other scene of clandestine distractions, consoled him for his own daily vexations and the ruin of the State. That is the unfortunate effect of vices on men of the most superior mind; they stifle any good inspirations at the source and prevent their rising. We have seen in our own days a man of practical virtue, a man of integrity and faith, an Archbishop of Paris like Retz, sincerely moved by the misfortunes and errors of the people and by civil dissensions, facing danger with simplicity, opening his arms and giving his life for the good of all, and Retz, retiring towards the end of the troubles to his cloister of Notre-Dame, entrenched in the shadow of his cathedral towers, and sheltering, as he said, under his Cardinal's hat, hesitated, with all his lights and worldly generosities, to do a public act which might hasten the issue and put an end to the universal suffering. He decided upon doing it, however, and was one of the chief negotiators for the return of the Court to Paris.

He gained little thanks for it, and, his past reputation still clinging to him, not without cause, he was treated simply as a politician, that is to say, that after making use of him in the first moment, they imprisoned him in the second.

His imprisonment, his flight, his sojourn at Rome, his travels and wanderings in different places, his later obstinacy in clinging to his archiepiscopal see of Paris, would provide us with too many lights on his weaknesses.

and the infirm sides of his nature. One of his advisers and dependents, who had fallen out with him, Gui Joly, has given us, in his Memoirs, some shameful details about them, which may be very true as regards material facts, but which are untrue in that they are altogether vile, and Retz was not vile. He had some generous qualities which never perished, and of which he gave proofs even in his old age, after his return to France. His peace having been made and his pardon obtained, after rather a long residence on his lordship at Commercy in Lorraine, he obtained permission to reappear at Fontainebleau and in Paris in 1664. There he again met all his friends and some who had been his enemies, and with whom he was frankly reconciled. Here we find a Cardinal de Retz who differs totally (saving the beauty of his mind) from what he had at first appeared. If he lived like a Cataline in his youth, as Voltaire says, in his old age he lived like an Atticus.

Among the men whom the Cardinal de Retz remembered on his arrival, there is one whom I take a pleasure in distinguishing, because he was a *bel esprit*, polished, honest and poor: the celebrated advocate Patru, one of the first French Academicians, highly esteemed by Boileau, one of the first to speak our language in its greatest purity, one of those arch and witty Parisians whom Retz had no trouble in rallying around him during the Fronde, with the Marignys, the Montreuls, the Bachaumonts. On needful occasions Patru had served him well with his pen and his witticisms. There is a letter from Patru to Retz, in which he excuses himself, on the score of his infirmities and deafness, for not being able to greet him at his return. We gather from it that some friends had spoken to the Cardinal about Patru's sad situation, and the latter regrets it; for he knows 'what a burden it must be to a magnanimous soul to be obliged to refuse:

'When I became your servant, he adds, I did not look at your hands. That heart which nothing can subdue, that goodness which cannot be sufficiently admired, all those so precious gifts with which Heaven has so lavishly endowed you, gave me to Your Eminence. It was not your purple, My Lord, nor the splendour or the crowns of your house, it was something greater, it was yourself, it was your virtue that attached me; and these ties cannot break, unless we lose either life or reason.'

It is a pleasure to contrast this noble testimony of so

estimable and intelligent a man as a counter-weight to the unmeasured imputations of a Gui Joly.

But it is Madame de Sévigné who makes us best acquainted with the Cardinal de Retz after his return, and makes us like him. She is inexhaustible on the subject of the Cardinal. Retz had got on her soft side by showing a particular affection for Madame de Grignan. When he came to Paris without seeing her, he was inconsolable: 'You make him wish for the death of the Pope,' wrote Madame de Sévigné to her daughter. Indeed, when the Pope died, the Cardinal de Retz did not fail to attend the Conclave to serve the interests of Louis XIV with zeal, and, on his passage through the Provence he was able to see Madame de Grignan. Although not yet very advanced in age, not having reached his three-score years, the Cardinal's health was greatly impaired. Madame de Sévigné did her utmost to offer him distractions: 'We try to amuse our good Cardinal (9 March 1672): Corneille has read to him one of his plays, which will be performed shortly, and which reminds us of the ancient tragedies; on Saturday Molière will read *Trissotin*, which is a very amusing thing; Despréaux will give him his *Lutrin* and his *Poétique*: that is the utmost we can do to serve him.' Ever happy and incomparable age, when the illustrious shipwrecked ones of politics, when their name is Retz, had to content themselves, to comfort them in the course of one week, with a Corneille, a Despréaux and a Molière in person, with their works in their hands, and Madame de Sévigné into the bargain!

This man who, as I have said, was never more than half a sedition-monger, and anything but a Cataline, as Voltaire called him, and who, even in his greatest revolts, had always respected, in so far as concerned the royal authority, what he called the *right of the sanctuary*, was become the most reconciled and the most zealous of the French Cardinals for the interests of Louis XIV. In spite of his growing infirmities, he three times (1667, 1669 and 1676) made the journey to Rome to prosecute and assert the intentions of the King in the Conclaves.

In 1675 however he was seized with an idea which appeared extraordinary and which excited great admiration among his contemporaries: that was to renounce the hat, and, after stripping himself of the Car-

dinal's dignity, to go and live in absolute retirement in Lorraine. The political world of Rome and of France combined to oppose a kind of renunciation which might have become a precedent and, in the future, a political weapon in the hands of the powers. Retz had to resign himself to keep his hat and to remain for his friends 'the very good Cardinal.' He greatly reduced his expenses; however, with the laudable intention of paying off all his creditors; he made it his point of honour. This last and sudden idea of a solemn humility, which was intended for a penitence, gave rise to much talk and in different senses: 'I meet only people, thank God, wrote Madame de Sévigné (24 July 1675), who regard his action in all its beauty, and who love him as we do. His friends do not want him to rivet himself to Saint-Mihiel, and advise him to go to Commercy and sometimes to Saint-Denis. He will keep his carriage in consideration of his purple; I am joyfully convinced that his life is not ended.'

Everybody wrote to him on this occasion to compliment him on his magnanimity. The banished Bussy-Rabutin, who took a more philosophical view of it, wrote him however a letter full of praise. Madame de Sévigné advised her daughter to write to him likewise on the subject and thus to re-enter into correspondence with him: 'When you have written this first letter, believe me, you need not be under any constraint; if you find some extravagant idea at the end of your pen, he will be as charmed with it as with a serious one: the religious foundation is no bar to these little *braidings*.'

Better, however, or worse than these *braidings* were those Memoirs in which the Cardinal de Retz took a secret pleasure, and which he had just finished at this time, in obedience to Madame de Caumartin, who had asked him for the story of his life. It is difficult to admit that the man who wrote them was the least bit touched by any religious thought. Still, as the last parts of it are supposed to have been written about this period of 1675-1676, it would be a bold thing to say that a thought of this nature had not at last sprung up in the heart of the Cardinal de Retz. The fact that several of his contemporaries, and even some who came into close contact with him, appeared to believe in his final belief in Chris-

tianity and a future life, is enough to impose reserve and respect on this supreme point.

Towards the end, Retz amused himself in his leisure hours at Commercy with talking and discoursing on the philosophy of Descartes, who was then in his greatest vogue. A certain Dom Robert Desgabets, Prior of the Abbey of Breuil, which was situated in one of the suburbs of Commercy, was a half-emancipated Cartesian and had the presumption to correct the master. Dom Hennezon, Abbot of Saint-Mihiel, who lived three leagues away, did not appreciate these pretended corrections of Dom Desgabets: the result was a regular philosophical dispute, in which the good Cardinal was made umpire. M. Cousin has published Retz' very judicious and cautious sentence. His conclusion on the fundamental question of these metaphysics was, after a thorough investigation, that *one did not know what to make of it*. That is a conclusion which may apply to many things here below. This great *frondeur*, who in his youth had in vain tried to hold the balance between the parties, between Monsieur, the Parliament and the Court, and who, in default of a balance, had taken a sword, and that even against M. le Prince, was come in his old age to this innocent arbitration.

The Cardinal de Retz did not hold out in his retreat in Lorraine, and he returned to his Abbey of Saint-Denis. The scoffers began to talk and to see in it an infraction of his great design. Madame de Sévigné has fully justified him:

'You know, she writes to Bussy, who would have been only too glad to join the scoffers (27 June 1678), you know that he has paid off eleven hundred thousand crowns. In doing this he has followed nobody's example, and nobody will follow him. We must trust him in short to keep his pledge. He is much more regular than in Lorraine, and he is always very worthy of honour. To those who want to be excused from paying him honour it makes no difference whether he remains at Commercy or returns to Saint-Denis.'

He died on the 24 August 1678, tenderly mourned by her and praised in terms which form the finest funeral oration, and leave us with the idea of a most amiable man, of the easiest intercourse, a delightful and perfect friend. Thus ended in peace and dignity the man who never had the qualities that make the complete revolutionary, and who, at his boldest, always stopped mere

than half-way on this side of Machiavelli or Cromwell. I mark it both as a fault and a title to praise.

An idea has just taken possession of my mind, and I cannot resist uttering it. We are approaching a period of wishes and prayers; I will give mine:

May all factionists, all agitators, all those who have passed their lives in stirring up parliaments and people, end as peacefully, as decently as the Cardinal de Retz, range themselves like him under the law of necessity and time, amuse themselves in their old age with their whist, their Cartesianism, the philosophy of their day (if there is still any philosophy), remain or become again perfectly amiable, talk with the Sévigné if they meet with any, and, when they write their Memoirs, fill them with the maxims of their experience, make them piquant, amusing, instructive, but not so captivating as to excite others after them to imitate their deeds and begin all over again!

CHARLES PERRAULT¹

Monday, 29 December 1851.

A YEAR ago to-day, on taking leave of Florian, I made an appointment with Perrault for the future New Year's gift: with pleasure I now keep my promise. Charles Perrault is, as everybody knows, the author or compiler of those seven or eight pretty Tales, old as the world, which charmed us in childhood, and which will still, I hope, charm generations to come, as long as there exist any fairies at least for the first age, and until they begin to teach chemistry and mathematics to infants in the cradle; but Charles Perrault is not only the author of these pretty Tales, he was in his day a man of new ideas, of inventions, fertile in plans and enterprises, turned towards the future, confident in the modern genius, and, in his quarrel with the most illustrious partisans of Antiquity, he was only half beaten. Nay, looking at the growing results of civilisation in the arts and industries, we may say that Perrault is triumphant.

He has himself, in some pleasing and very natural Memoirs, given us an account of his early years and a great part of his life. Born at Paris on the 12 January 1628, in a good and wealthy middle-class family, his mother taught him to read; his father was his first tutor and coach; he was educated at the so-called *Collège de Beauvais*, returning in the evenings to the paternal roof. Full of facility, writing poetry in preference to prose, he was fond besides of disputing, of asking the reason of things, of discovering new arguments in support of his opinions. One day in the Philosophy class, when his professor silenced him, he got up and left the room,

¹ *Les Contes de Fées*, by Charles Perrault.

followed by a comrade called Beaurain, who was his second in all things. They first went together to the garden of the Luxembourg, just as the Roman insurgents retired to the Aventine or the Sacred Mount, and there they decided not to go back to school, which they considered useless, and to study together in freedom :

' We carried out our resolution, says Perrault, and for three or four years in succession, M. Beaurain came to my house twice almost every day, in the morning from eight to eleven, and from three to five in the afternoon. If I know anything, I owe it especially to these three or four years of study. We read nearly the whole of the Bible, and nearly all Tertullian, the Histories of France of La Serre (or rather of Jean de Serres) and of Davila ; we translated Tertullian's treatise *Of the Clothing of Women* ; we read Virgil, Horace, Tacitus, and most of the other classical authors, from which we made extracts that I still possess.'

It will be seen what an amalgam of readings that formed, and how motley must have been the extracts. This retreat of the young Perrault to the Luxembourg is, I repeat, his retreat to the Aventine ; there he emancipates himself and prepares to become soon a kind of tribune of new ideas.

If he continued to read the Ancients in this promiscuous and confused fashion, he did not reverence them much ; he parodied them at first by instinct and for his diversion before doing so from calculation. It was the time when burlesques were the fashion, the signal having been given by Scarron. Perrault, incited by his comrade Beaurain, begins to translate into burlesque lines the sixth book of the *Æneid* (the most admired of all, in which is described the descent of Æneas to the infernal regions). The laughter of the two rhymesters attracted a brother of Perrault, who was afterwards a doctor at the Sorbonne, and he joined in the pleasantry. His other brother the physician, and afterwards a celebrated architect, also joined the game and made some pretty drawings in Chinese ink to illustrate the manuscript. Virgil had represented his heroes in the Elysian Fields as continuing the same inclinations and habits they had had in life ; which suggested to the Perrault brothers the *Shade of a charioteer* :

Qui, tenant l'Ombre d'un le brosse,
Nettoyait l'Ombre d'un carrosse.

This extravagant idea originated with the Sorbonne

doctor. From this we may see what an active, witty and irreverent family they were. Boileau spoke of their intellectual *bizarres*. I should rather call it originality, and those of the present day who are most competent to judge Claude Perrault, the physician, natural philosopher and architect, admit without hesitation that there was genius in his views on comparative anatomy and physiology, on mechanics, and in his noble conceptions in the fine arts.

When the quarrels arose in the Sorbonne on Grace, of which all the world spoke without understanding anything about it, Charles and Claude Perrault and a few of their friends wished to 'know all about it.' Always that idea of understanding everything, which is the sign of modern emancipation. They asked their brother the doctor to explain this obscure question; and, when they saw that it amounted to so little, they advised the Gentlemen of Port-Royal through Vitart, a cousin of Racine, to make it clear to the public that a great deal of fuss was being made about nothing. A week later Vitart brought them the first of Pascal's *Lettres provinciales*, with the words: 'Here is what you asked me for.'

Our Charles Perrault is called to the bar; he pleads, but his sensible and natural vision is directed far beyond the brief-bag. In the matter of legislation, he already conceives some of those simple and unique ideas which through Colbert will reappear in the Constituent Assembly, the Convention and the Council of State under Bonaparte:

'I studied, he says, and learned without a master the Institutes with the aid of Borcholten's commentaries. The Institutes are an excellent book and the only part of the Roman Law that I should like to see preserved: for, with the exception of this book which is very useful for fortifying common sense, and the Ordinances and Customs which it would be a good thing to revise for the whole of France, if that were possible, together with the weights and measures, I think that all the other books of jurisprudence should be burned, Digests, Codes with their commentaries, and particularly all the books of Decisions, since there would be no better means in the world of lessening the number of law-suits.'

But Perrault soon wearies of trailing his gown in the *Palais*; from advocate he becomes clerk to his eldest brother, Receiver-General of the Finances of Paris. This post leaves him some leisure time, and he writes poetry, in the gallant and affected style of the time.

His poetic debut was a certain *Portrait d'Iris*, which Quinault thought so pretty that he assumed it for it with a young lady he was enamoured of:

Ses cheveux longs et noirs, luisants et déhés,
Par boucles épanchus et galumant liés,
Ombrent doucement la fraîcheur de sa jo

It was, in short, the kind of poetry to charm a Quinault and to madden Boileau.

Opera poetry, scene-painting, Perrault can conceive nothing finer; that is the weak side of his taste. Art, style, in their majestic and severe aspects, or in their exquisite qualities, escape him, and he is tempted to confound them in everything with the gloss of industry. To arouse his admiration it is enough to make him see a thing is witty, clever and brilliant, with a happy appropriateness to the circumstances and the society of the moment. In his eyes Quinault is superior to La Fontaine, and the painter Le Brun (oh, sacrilege!) greater than Raphael.

At the same time that he rhymes for Iris, Perrault directs and superintends the building of a house at Viry, his brother's estate. This work gains him such distinction, that the description of it turns Colbert's attention to Perrault, and determines that Minister to engage him as clerk in the Superintendentence of the King's Buildings in 1664. Perrault was a universal genius. In our days, he would have constructed a railway and composed a vaudeville. He would have offered his ideas for the Crystal Palace in London, and would have perfected the daguerreotype.

He was, with the Abbé de Bourzeis, Chapelain and Cassagne, one of the original four who formed the little Academy intended by Colbert to furnish pretty and erudite mottoes and inscriptions for the King's Buildings. It afterwards developed into the Academy of Inscriptions and Belle-lettres. Before it began to decipher Egyptian and Phœnician inscriptions, this body first consisted of a quartet of *beaux esprits* who were in the Minister's confidence, and whose duty it was to devise royal mottoes.

Perrault excelled in this kind of intellectual work as well as in the designing of drawings and plans for the subjects of the tapestries and hangings that were

ordered at the Gobelins, or for the subjects of the sculptures intended for the decoration of Versailles. With facility and breadth he invented more or less mythological allegories which always aimed at the glorification of the King: everything had to point in that direction. Every great epoch produces these intellects which appear to have been especially created for its service, which are infatuated, intoxicated with its greatness, and have no forerunners in a preceding age. Such was Charles Perrault in his relation to the age of Louis the Great. In everything that concerns buildings and fine arts, he can see nothing beyond. Versailles is his temple; in his eyes it contains all the wonders of the world; he only observes that what he calls the Muses occupies less room than anything else, and he thinks to make up for the deficiency with descriptions à la Scudery and madrigals à la Benserade. Perrault presented the first collection of his Works in beautiful manuscript and in the form of an album to the library of the castle of Versailles, as a sort of *votive offering* to the divinity of the place.

Meanwhile Perrault had a hand in all the grand or useful ideas of the Colbert ministry. He assisted with all his power in the organisation of the Academy of Sciences which was founded about this time, and of which his brother was one of the first members. He gives us some curious details about this creation as well as about the other acts of the great Minister's liberality. These first foundations of Colbert did not however all endure to the same degree; they sometimes had more frontage than depth, more veneer than substance. Thus, on the subject of those favours and pensions which were distributed with so much ostentation in the name of Louis XIV among all the illustrious people of France and Europe, this is what Perrault tells us:

* Some of these pensions went to Italy, to Germany, to Denmark, to Sweden, and to the furthest extremities of the North: they went there by letters of exchange. With regard to those which were distributed at Paris, in the first year they were delivered at the houses of all the recipients, by the clerk of the Treasurer of the Buildings, in the neatest of gold-embroidered silk purses; in the second year they were delivered in leather purses. As nothing in this world can endure in the same state, but must naturally decline, in the following years the pensions had to be called for at the Treasury, and were paid in ordinary coin. In course of time the years extended to fifteen and sixteen months; and, when war was declared with Spain, a large portion of these gratuities lapsed.*

But the idea, the first intention survived, and has given its judgment, from a distance, on the whole show.

Perrault sets forth at full length and establishes the true share that his brother the physician, who took in the building of the Observatory and the front of the Louvre. With regard to the latter, he adds: 'The idea of the peristyle was mine, and when I communicated it to my brother, he approved it and entered it upon his drawings, but with vast improvements.' The charlatanism of the Cavaliere Bernini, who is brought in, and we can even hear the rude oaths with which Colbert received him under his breath, and which he dissembled aloud. The courtier's artfulness, the flattering and happily betrayed. This hard and stern Minister are no less known to Colbert until we are seated beside him in his work-room with Perrault.

Colbert one day asked Perrault for information about the French Academy, thinking he was a member. He appeared astonished when the latter entered him that he had not that honour: 'You must be a member, the King has said Colbert; it is a Company for which I went my going a great affection, and, as my affairs were glad to hear there as often as I could wish, I shall be glad to hear of all that takes place there through you. You must stand for the first vacant seat.' Shortly after, Gilles Boileau, elder brother of Despréaux, who was a member of the Academy long before the latter, died (1669), and Perrault tried for his place; but the Chancellor (Séguier) had promised the seat. He had been initiated, another occasion. No sooner had he been initiated, when he brought activity and a sort of revolution into that body, as he loved to do in all things.

On the day of his reception (21st November 1671), he delivered an address (21st), which was much appreciated by the assembly; but these addresses, although they were already of an oratorical nature, had hitherto been delivered with closed doors, and, when Perrault was commended, he replied that, if his speech had given pleasure to the Gentlemen of the Academy, it should have done the same to all the world, if they had been admitted to hear it; he added that

it would not be a bad thing for the Academy to open its doors on reception days, and to show itself in all its glory. This idea was supposed to have originated with Colbert, and the Academy, which was at this period very docile to the powers, hastened to modify its custom and to make the reception ceremony public.¹ Thus, these discourses, which as soon as they were delivered in public, became more correct, more academic, and which formed a class of their own, are one of the innovations which we owe to Perrault, and one of those innovations which are so much in accordance with French ways that they kept their attraction in the midst of all the changes that have since succeeded each other.²

Yet another innovation of Perrault's. Before his time the elections to the Academy were conducted amicably, by word of mouth, and without any ballot :

'Shortly after my reception I said that it appeared to me that God must have assisted in choosing those who had been hitherto received, seeing the manner in which they were elected, but that to continue in the same manner would be to tempt him ; that I thought that henceforth we should elect by ballot and with papers, in order that every member might be at full liberty to vote for the one he desired.'

Here again Perrault's proposal was thought to cover an idea of Colbert's, and the Academy adopted this new mode of election. The first ballot box was made at his expense and even according to his design. We see that he had abundance of inventive talent.

¹ Fléchier was the first to profit by this new arrangement (1673) and to set the example of this kind of solemn and applauded oration. Twenty years later (1693), La Bruyère's reception address, which caused a sensation and even an uproar, and which appeared to exceed the bounds, led to a new statute of the Academy to the effect that the speech of the new member should be first read before a committee before being delivered in public sitting.

² Ladies were not however admitted at first : it was thirty years before they were allowed to be present, and then only partially so, at these academic sittings which they now adorn and invade. We read in Dangeau's Journal of the 7 December 1702 : 'The Bishop of Sens was admitted at the Academy. M. Chamillart, his brother (then a favourite minister), was at the reception. In a cabinet adjoining the room where the receptions take place a gallery had been erected for the ladies. They had never before been admitted to any of the meetings of the French Academy, but only to those of the Academy of Sciences and Inscriptions.' And Saint-Simon, Dangeau's annotator, adds : 'This novelty of the women was in favour of Chamillart's daughters and their lady friends, who went there to scoff at poor Sens,' who was, indeed, a very unacademic subject.

Meanwhile the wars continue and the operations are extended : Louvois wins the day. Colbert is obliged to meet the extraordinary expenses ; his humour changes :

' We remarked that hitherto, when Colbert entered his cabinet, he would set to work with a contented air and rubbing his hands with joy, but that since then he seldom took his seat without a vexed look and even a sigh. M. Colbert from being easy-going became particular and hard to please.'

Perrault's influence with Colbert declines in proportion as that of the latter declines with the King. He is rude to Perrault, offends him, and the latter resigns.

But apropos of Perrault's influence and his rôle as an intermediary between the Minister and the Academies, I confess that, looking at the matter simply, I cannot possibly share the more than severe opinion of a respected critic (M. Daunou) ; I can see nothing that savours of corruption in this activity of Perrault ; I cannot see that he was more of a courtier than many others at that time, including Racine and even Boileau.* Without any further reply I will confine myself to quoting the following pleasing anecdote which illustrates Perrault's sincere and ingenuous character, and allow the reader to gain his own impression from it :

' When the garden of the Tuilleries had been replanted and arranged as you see them at present, M. Colbert said to me : " Let us go to the Tuilleries and condemn the gates ; we must keep this garden for the King, and not allow it to be destroyed by the public, who would make a wilderness of it in less than no time." This decision appeared to me rather hard and unpleasant for the whole of Paris. When he was in the broad walk I said to him : " You would not believe, Sir, how this garden is respected by everybody, even the humblest citizen ; even the women and little children never think of picking, or even touching, a flower. They all take their walk here like reasonable people ; the gardeners will confirm my statement, sir : it would be a public calamity if they were no longer allowed to walk here. . . . " " It is only loafers that come here," he said. " People come here," I replied, who are convalescent after sickness, to take the air ; others come to speak of business, of marriages, and all kinds of matters that are more conveniently discussed in a garden than in a church, where they would have to meet in future. I am convinced," I went on, that the gardens of kings are so large and spacious only in order that all their children may enjoy them." He smiled at these words, and as just then most of the gardeners of the Tuilleries were gathered together before him, he asked them if the people did not do a great deal of damage in their garden : " None at all, My Lord, they nearly all answered together, they content themselves with walking about and looking." " These gentlemen," I resumed, even gain by it, for the grass does not grow so easily in the avenues." M. Colbert took a turn round the garden, gave his orders and did not again speak of closing the entrance to anybody.

I was very glad to have in a way prevented the public from being deprived of this promenade. If M. Colbert had once closed the Tuileries, there is no knowing when they would have been reopened.'

The opening to the public of these gardens from that time, which we owe to Perrault, is quite in keeping with the pleasant idea we have formed of the friend and enchanter of childhood, the author of the *Fairy Tales*. Shall I give utterance to a thought that has often occurred to me when traversing this garden with its numerous statues? I should like to see a marble bust of Perrault placed in the shadow of the large chestnut-tree.

Having retired from public affairs, at more than fifty years of age, Perrault took up his residence in his house in the Faubourg Saint-Jacques, near the colleges, to superintend the education of his sons, and, taking advantage of his spare leisure hours, he there composed his poem of *Saint Paulin*, which he dedicated to Bossuet (1686).

Like Desmaretz de Saint-Sorlin and other opponents of Boileau, Perrault was of opinion that the Christian religion was of a nature to lend itself to poetic treatment, and that it even provided the modern imagination with its true stock of ideas. But that was only a theory which remained sterile in their hands, and could only become a living and flourishing thing by the aid of the genius of a Milton or the art of a Chateaubriand.

We have reached the time of the great literary wars which filled the end of the seventeenth century, and which have given a doubtful celebrity to the name of Perrault. An enthusiast for the beauties of his age, and gathering into a bundle the admirations of his youth, he consecrated them in a little poem with the title: *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand*, which he read to the Academy on the 27 January 1687, that is to say on the day when that body had assembled to testify its joy at the convalescence of the King, who had undergone an operation. The majority of Perrault's lines in this little poem are detestable; many of the ideas are venturesome. Openly preferring his own to all the preceding ages, he spoke lightly of Homer, of Mœnander, of all the most revered names among the classics. He gave expression however, to a very philosophical idea, namely, that there is no reason why nature should not still create as great

men as it did formerly, and that there is room, in her inexhaustible fertility, for an eternal renovation of talents. Here are a few lines to that effect which appear, to me by no means contemptible :

A former les esprits comme à former les corps,
La Nature en tous temps fait les mêmes efforts ;
Son Être est immuable, et cette force aisée
Dont elle produit tout ne s'est point épuisée .
Jamais l'astre du jour qu'aujourd'hui nous voyons
N'eut le front couronné de plus brillants rayons ;
Jamais dans le printemps les roses empoüvrées
D'un plus vif incarnat ne furent colorées :
Non moins blanc qu'autrefois brille dans nos jardins
L'éblouissant émail des lis et des jasmins,
Et dans le siècle d'or la tendre Philomèle,
Qui charma nos aïeux de sa chanson nouvelle,
N'avait rien de plus doux que celle dont la voix
Réveille les échos qui dorment dans nos bois :
De cette même main les forces lumineuses
Produisent en tout temps de semblables génies.

One can hardly imagine the anger which possessed some of the Academicians, on hearing him express these doctrines. Boileau rose to his feet in a fury, and said it was a disgrace for the Academy to tolerate such words. The learned Huet had to recall him to moderation, and pointed out to him that he was not the only man who represented Antiquity. Racine, more self-possessed and more ironical, congratulated Perrault on his *tour de force*, saying it was very clear that by this witty conceit he only wished to express perfectly the very opposite of what he thought. From this day, Boileau never ceased, in his writings, to hurl epigrams at Perrault and his illustrious brother ; and for his own part, without showing such personal anger, Perrault applied himself more and more to the development of his doctrines with wit and a mixture of levity and good sense which did not fail to fascinate the indifferent and pique his adversaries.

Perrault's *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (four volumes) began to appear in 1688, and was continued in the following years. The preface to his first volume, in the first place, is very witty ; he describes anew the origin of the quarrel, the insults which he reaped with the opinions expressed in his poem *Le Siècle de Louis le Grand*. Moreover he takes the matter pleasantly, and thinks it quite natural that others should disagree with

him : ' for nothing is more permissible, nor more agreeable, than diversity of opinions on these matters.' Observe that one of the first conditions that it becoms the Moderns to bring to this dispute (and Perrault is fully sensible of it), is freedom from prejudice. His opponents are not in a mood for jesting, not they ; they turn red with anger ; to attack the ancient orators or poets is almost like attacking Holy Scripture or the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils. Perrault does not take it so seriously ; he speaks without any restraint. He is a mere amateur who is giving his opinion ; that is his prerogative and his pleasure :

L'agréable dispute où nous nous amusons
 Passera, sans finir, jusqu'aux races futures ;
 Nous dirons toujours des raisons,
 Ils diront toujours des injures. ¹

Against the scholars by profession and those who lay down the law especially in the matter of belles-lettres and fine arts, it is clear, from the way in which the battle is begun and from the very first lines, that Perrault will to a great extent have the right on his side. He reduces his thesis to the following : ' In a word, I am very convinced that, if the Ancients are excellent, as everybody must admit, the Moderns do not yield to them in any respect and even surpass them in many things.' In the passion of the dispute, he will go much farther ; but at the beginning that is all that he claims to prove.

Against the learned men among his friends, Charpentier,² Ménage, the Dacier couple and the pedants with names ending in *us* ; against those illustrious translators who, at the least criticism of Plato or Homer, become as angry as if they were descended from them in the direct line (for the collaterals would never take the matter

¹ Since then, however, it must be admitted that the tendency has changed a little, and that the partisan of perfectibility and the worshipper of the future has become, in his turn, a sort of high priest, who excites himself by all kinds of dithyrambs and claims to lay down the law for the future : it is not pleasant for an amateur to contradict him. But at that time they were only commencing.

² I do not forget that Charpentier was one of Perrault's friends and, to a certain extent, one of his partisans, and that Ménage, leaving aside the question of the Ancients, esteemed Perrault as one of our best poets ; but I choose Charpentier as representing dull learning, and Ménage as representing pedantic learning. As to M. and Madame Dacier, they took the matter very seriously.

so much to heart); against all these it seems to me that Perrault wins his case with ease in the eyes of posterity. He rallies them with wonderful skill, and makes game of those learned reputations which have been acquired with so much ostentation. He describes the method of their manufacture, and, if this raillery is never able to touch scholars who are really worthy of the name, it struck fairly 'a certain noisy race of savants' who still held their own at that time.

The Renaissance had produced its effect; it had inundated and penetrated all branches of intellectual activity; it had even encumbered them. It was necessary to get rid of the consequences. What Descartes had done in philosophy, others did in the order of Letters; and those men of a frivolous and offensive but bold taste, Perrault, Fontenelle, contributed their good share in their own way.

In this sense, Perrault purposely applies the method of Descartes to the investigation of literature and the arts; he is one of the first to proclaim it boldly, and with full consciousness of what he is doing:

'Authority, he says, has at present no power and should have none except in theology and jurisprudence. . . . Everywhere else reason may act like a sovereign and exercise its rights. What! are we to be forbidden to bring our judgment to bear on the works of Homer and Virgil, Demosthenes and Cicero, and to form our own opinions of them, because others before us have formed theirs! Nothing could be more unreasonable.'

Perrault is very sensible, however, of the importance of what he is doing. Others will come when he has broken the ice; and he is drawing up an advance programme of the consequences he foresees. Bacon had said many of these things and much better than he. Perrault, who thinks he is the first to discover them, expresses and publishes them wittily.

On all branches of art, craft and science, he again wins his case rather easily, at least generally speaking. No doubt he did not sufficiently recognise the fact that on many points of mechanics, chemistry and other branches of knowledge, the Ancients had discovered by experience, by the sense of touch and by an early good fortune, secrets which were as valuable and perhaps more valuable than ours, and which have since been lost.

The progress of chemistry will never put in the shade that illustrious Tyrian purple which was reputed incomparable in tradition. But, saving these details, it remains too evident that in geography, in astronomy and mechanics, the Moderns have an immense and growing advantage. Perrault is very well aware that methods in all things form the great superiority of the Moderns.

When he speaks of Versailles, Perrault shows all the legitimate pride of the man who was Colbert's right arm in the building operations; it was at Versailles that he laid the scene of his Dialogues; it was on the grand staircase that he thought he could best demonstrate the irresistible triumph of his opinion. Three persons who have gone to see the wonders of Versailles, talk together on this question, which has recently come into fashion, of the Ancients and Moderns: a President, a savant and rather opinionative, who several times loses his temper; a Chevalier, thoughtless, agreeable, bold, even impertinent on occasion, who starts the hares; between the two an Abbé, well-informed, but original in ideas, who is intended to represent the moderator and sage. These men hold five dialogues on the arts, the sciences, eloquence and poetry.

It is on the latter point especially that we could seize him and stop him short. Perrault has no understanding for poetry.

He does not understand it, and yet he throws out a thousand very novel and very witty ideas on the subject, which the science of criticism has since more or less exploited; he opens out some happy and unexpected views. He understands then certain parts at least of poetry; but the substance and the gist of it he does not understand.

He believes that the poets may be judged through translations; he speaks of Homer and Theocritus without taking the trouble to penetrate into their genius for grandeur and delicacy. And so in every art. He considers Versailles greatly superior to the Parthenon, and he mentions the Val-de-Grâce as eclipsing the Fontaine des Innocents.

When we read him we find the true, the false and the incomplete mingled on every page. His impertinent

Chevalier says quite glibly: *Homer and Mademoiselle de Scudéry*. He asserts that the Ancients were mere barbarians in the matter of love. But the Abbé, who is more judicious, remarks that the Moderns have perfected analysis in every subject, and that, 'as anatomy has discovered in the heart valves, fibres, movements and symptoms which escaped the knowledge of the Ancients, morality has also found inclinations, aversions, *desires* and *dislikes* that the same Ancients never knew.' To verify and illustrate these distinctions, he needed only examples that any present-day reader could bring forward, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* to *René*.

When I read these bold assertions of Perrault and Boileau's replies, what strikes me, is that they are both very much in the right, but incompletely so, without replying to each other, almost without meeting. They are like two armies that carry out a great many manœuvres, but only meet in partial combats and skirmishes. Boileau feels Perrault's heresies in the matter of poetry and they anger him. To avenge Pindar whom the other insulted, he imagined a singular means of defence, which was to write his Pindaric Ode on the *Taking of Namur* (1693), which lent itself so much to criticism and compromised his cause. When Boileau composed his bitter Satire on *Women*, Perrault, better advised, constituted himself their champion and published a poem with a Preface, entitled: *L'Apologie des Femmes* (1694). He had always thought highly of their judgment, and was of opinion that in matters of taste their preference is decisive: 'We know the correctness of their discernment, he thought, in fine and delicate matters, their sensibility with regard to things that are clear, vivid, natural and sensible, and their immediate dislike for all that is obscure, heavy, constrained and involved.' In the Preface to his *Apologie*, Perrault criticised the lines of Boileau's Satire for being, among other things, 'more hard, more dry, more cut up, that they encroached more upon each other, that they were more full of transpositions and faulty cesuras than any he had yet composed.' Those who, twenty-five years ago, witnessed the romantic quarrels of our days, and still remember them, will smile to see Boileau accused of *enjambements* and *faulty cesuras*.

The old Arnould, or, as he was called, the great Arnould, then a refugee at Brussels and eighty-two years of age, was greatly excited by this dispute on women between his friend Boileau and Perrault, who was a brother of one of his friends. The substance of the question was more foreign to him than to anybody else. He maintained that Boileau's Satire was most moral, most exemplary, and that Perrault's imputations, in this matter, were ill-founded and outrageous. As Perrault had sent him his *Apologie des Femmes*, Arnould thought himself bound to reply to him in a long letter in which he displayed his arguments and reasons, and which the person he had charged with it did not think proper to deliver, for fear of still more embittering the disputants whom the old Doctor wished to reconcile in a Christian manner. In the end this grave affair was referred to the judgment of Bossuet, who made out Perrault to be less in the wrong than Arnould had done; whereupon Racine contrived a reconciliation between the two opponents which, without ever being very tender, was at least sincere and sufficient.

It was as a good husband and father of a family, much more than as a poet, that Perrault had replied to Boileau, the bachelor and valetudinarian satirist, who had been an orphan since his birth, and had never had a mother to tell him fireside tales. While telling them to his children it occurred to Perrault to write them down, and he published them in January 1697; they are supposed to be told by his young son (Perrault d'Armancourt). *The Sleeping Beauty, Little Red Riding-hood, Blue-beard, Puss in Boots, Cinderella, Riquet of the Tuft, Hop o' my Thumb*, what need is there to more than mention the mere titles of these little masterpieces? Scholars have written dissertations on this subject. It is certain that with regard to the subject matter of these Tales, as well as of *Peau d'Ane (Ass' Skin)* which he wrote in verse, Perrault must have dipped into the store of popular tradition, and that he only fixed in writing what has been told from time immemorial by every *grand-mother*. But his style is simple, fluent, naïvely sincere, with a touch of malice and levity; it is such that all the world can copy it and think they have invented it. The little morals in verse at the end of the Tales are a

little suggestive of the friend of Quinault and the Gallic contemporary of La Fontaine, but they need not be regarded as part of the story, and they help to fix their dates. If I might return, apropos of these children's Tales, to the big quarrel of the Ancients and Moderns, I should say that they provide an argument against Perrault himself, for this fund of marvellous and childish imagination necessarily belongs to an ancient and very previous age; one would not now invent these things, if they had not been imagined long ago; they would not be current, if they had not been received and been believed long before our time. We do no more than vary them and clothe them differently. There is an age then for certain fictions and certain happy credulities, and if human knowledge grows continually, imagination does not flourish in the same degree.

We must stop there with Perrault, for that is his glory. A few months before this pleasing publication and this gift to childhood, he issued (1696) the first folio volume entitled: *Les Hommes illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle*, with magnificent engraved portraits: the second volume, which appeared in 1700, completed the work and the number *one hundred*, at which Perrault had fixed his portraits. The brevity and simplicity of the text helped to give the book its monumental character. With a pleasing and judicious diversity the author mixed up princes, cardinals, ministers of State, soldiers, scholars, poets, engineers, artists or, as they still called them at that time, artisans. By the extent and the generosity of this assemblage, a noble thought of a worthy servant of Colbert, Perrault was still faithful to that first inspiration which never ceased to animate him even in his idolatry for the monarchy of his time, I mean the idea of modern emancipation and equality.

A little forgotten and neglected, the good Perrault died in May 1703, at the age of seventy-five years, bequeathing the best part of his ideas to Fontenelle, who made the most of them.

NOTES

Page 5, line 12 from bottom. Pibrac maxims :

Lisez-moi comme il faut, au lieu de ces sornettes,
Les *Quatrains* de Pibrac, et les doctes *Tablettes*
Du conseiller Matthieu, ouvrage de valeur
Et plein de beaux dictons à réciter par cœur.

Gorgias in Molière's *Sganarelle*.

The *Quatrains moraux* (1574) of Guy du Faur de Pibrac had an immense vogue in France and were translated into many languages.

Page 8, line 5 from bottom. 'Still undaunted in this new danger, they all with firm and silent step march to their death; all are slaughtered. . . . Sire, there were three thousand of them.'

Page 9, line 13 from bottom. '. . . They are still singing! . . . they sing no more!'

Page 10, line 14.

Nérine. Dans un si grand revers que vous reste-t-il ?

Médée.

Moi,

Moi, dis-je, et c'est assez.

(Corneille, *Médée*, I, 5.)

Julie. Que vouliez-vous qu'il fit contre trois ?

Le vieil Horace.

Qu'il mourût,

Ou qu'un beau désespoir alors le secourût.

(Corneille, *Horace*, III, 6.)

Page 18, line 15 from bottom. *La Religieuse de Toulouse* ; see Vol. II, page 85, of the present translation.

Page 32, line 2 from bottom. *Acts* ; academic disputations on a given thesis.

Page 36, line 10. Dumouriez at the defiles of the Argonne ; see Creasy's *Battle of Valmy*, in the *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*.

Page 49, line 1. For the articles on Chamfort and Rulhière, see Vol VII of the present translation.

Page 49, line 5 from bottom. 'In Bagnols I first saw the light, in the tavern where my late father catered for weddings and banquets on moderate terms.'

Page 61, line 9. 'May you ever show me your good taste as a good fruit does its flavour, and your wit as a rose emits its perfume.'

Page 61, line 14. *Lisette*, so often sung by Béranger, typifies the class of grisettes.

Page 72, line 10. See also page 77, line 10 from bottom. Napoleon said of her that she was 'the only man in the family.'

Page 74, line 3. 'The tears of kings have been counted ; those of the people are too numerous for that.'

Page 75, line 5 from bottom. Madame Cottin, author of *Claire d'Albe*, *Élisabeth*, ou *les Exilés de Sibérie* (1806) and other romantic and melancholy stories, which had a prodigious vogue during the first half of the nineteenth century.

Page 82, line 15. Hôtel-Dieu ; the principal hospital in Paris.

Page 82, middle. Boissy d'Anglas voted against the death of Louis XVI in the Convention, and on the 20 May (1795), as President, offered a stout resistance to the invading populace.

Page 84, line 17. 'O Zélis, thou hearest me not, but I will weep and forget my distress in thy embrace !'

Page 84, middle. Ragotin, an undersized provincial briefless barrister, the butt of many practical jests, in Scarron's *Roman comique*.

Page 84, line 6 from bottom. See page 101.

Page 88, middle. *Macte animo*, 'go in and win !'

Page 99, line 4. Pradon, a second-rate dramatist who set himself up as a rival to Racine, and was employed as a tool by the Duchess of Bouillon and others in their conspiracy against the great poet.

Page 100, line 13. 'Restless, quick to anger, relentless, keen.' Hor., *A.P.*, 121.

Page 101, line 5, etc. 'If ever I call up out of the depths of his journal this vulgar flatterer of the sophists of the day; when his name is enough to excite ridicule, need I, instead of mentioning him, write mysteriously thus: *I mean that little poetaster, puffed up by the winning of so many prizes, who, hissed for his verse, hooted for his prose, all bruised from the stumblings of his tragic Muse, after many a fall dropped into the academic chair?* These are shifts worthy only of a mean and malicious slanderer. . . ."

'Somebody has said that the impertinence of La Harpe's face invites one to smack it. Those words are merely insulting. I prefer to see the pride of a conceited fellow hit and put down by a softer, lighter and unexpected blow. Let us say: this indifferent rhymester hugs himself; if the public loves him not, it is but right that he should love himself; he has stamped himself a great man and calls himself immortal in the *Mercure*!—In these words there is no cruelty. He once praised me in his childish prose; but, ten times thrust from the throne of Racine, he sulks; and his spite, they say, has vexed me. The ingrate! I was the only one who did not hiss him.'

Page 102, line 3. 'On La Harpe, after he had spoken irreverently of the great Corneille. This little man; with his limited range, would without shame enslave genius; he trots along at the foot of Pindus and thinks he is scaling the summits of Aonia. He has insulted the great Corneille; but, truth to say, it excited loud laughter to see this dwarf measuring an Atlas, and, redoubling his pigmy efforts, stiffening his little arms to stifle so great a renown.'

Page 102, line 18. Dorat, a prolific writer of elegant frivolities, in Voltaire's style, and one of the principal purveyors of the *Almanachs des Muses*.

Page 106, last line. Saint-Ange (1747–1810), author of *Poésies fugitives*, *Héroïdes*, comedies, etc.; he is best in his translations, as of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Mercier (1740–1814) wrote in 1773 an *Essai sur l'Art dramatique*, a violent declaration of war against classical art, in which he advocated, instead of the conventional themes, the representation of modern society, especially of the people.

He exemplified his teachings in several plays produced at the Comédie italienne, especially in *La brouette du Vinaigrier* and *Le Déserteur*.

Page 107, line 1. Rétif de La Bretonne, probably the most indecent of French novelists, very successful in his day, not only in France.

Page 109, last line. 'I have anticipated God in judging the living and the dead.'

Page 116, line 17 from bottom. *La Wasprie*, an allusion to Fréron, usually called *Frélon* (hornet or *wasp*), by Voltaire.

Page 119, line 7. Les Délices, the name of Voltaire's first Swiss home.

Page 110, line 13 from bottom. 'Thy soul has launched into the bosom of the Infinite, thou hast peopled the waste places with thy great thoughts. Nature, with thee, made seven splendid strides; and, embracing the whole extent of her vast realm, thy immortal audacity has set seven torches on the road of Time.'

Page 120, line 16, etc. 'Flattered by the pleasure it gives to volatile tastes, Wit is the god of the present moment. Genius is the god of ages: it alone embraces all times.'

'Those who make the present their idol leave no trace of memory behind them: they have wasted their future in a vain and empty success. Lovers of the short-lived rose, theirs is the deceptive charm and the lot of the rapidly fading flower: their longest reign is that of a morning; but Time ever and again rejuvenates the ancient laurel of the nine Sisters.'

Page 121, line 3, etc. 'But when inexorable Fate struck down this irreplaceable man, our regrets made him a god.'

'As long as he is alive we do our best to injure the great man; when he is dead we fall down before him: we tolerate fame only in one who is no longer present; when we remember him, we acknowledge his greatness, but as long as he is with us we look upon him with jealous and ungrateful eyes.'

Page 121, line 13 from bottom. *Exegi monumentum ære perennius*, 'I have reared (to myself) a monument more enduring than bronze.' Horace, *Odes*, III, 30, 1.

Page 122, line 12 from bottom. *Droit du Seigneur* (*jus primæ noctis*); this infamous right, with other abuses of the *ancien régime*, inspired Beaumarchais to write his immortal *Mariage de Figaro*; Voltaire wrote a comedy on the same theme, *Le Droit du Seigneur*. See also Dickens' *Tale of Two Cities*, Book III, chap. 10.

Page 123, line 7, etc. 'To Thee. If we shed tears, if any light clouds threatened to dim our most tranquil life, a magic Zephyr will lay the storm and easily calm those waves which roared without anger. A glance from *Misis* shall dissipate thy alarms, dear sweetheart! believe *Misis*, who is at thy knees, etc.'

'How easy to deceive a child of the Muses!'

Page 124, line 3, etc. 'But not one of them was ever, in the height of his misery, struck at once by wife, mother and sister.'

'Can the owl, with her bashful eye, see what the eagle and *Calonne* have seen with their keen glance?'

Page 125, line 5. 'Noble blood of Henry, can I fail to recognise thee? Nay, it still lives, and *Sully* will rise again.'

Page 126, line 19, etc. 'That usurping insect named *Majesty*!'

'Come and see, wicked Councillors, a King without a people, without a friend! You alone are his enemies, vile Courtiers, base Ministers!'

'He might have reigned over all our hearts, this feeble and this . . . perjured monarch! He claims to rule the dead! Vainly does pity murmur: *Heaven demands something more than remorse.*'

'Oh! what a baneful gift Vienna sent to France! thou who hast kindled the torch of Discord, Queen given us by Heaven in its anger, why did not the lightning consume thee at birth! How many crimes would that happy stroke have spared! drunk with our blood, fatal Beauty, horrible woman! . . .'

Page 127, line 6, etc. 'Oh! how sweet for thee to see, on the tragic stage, the weeping *Aménaïde* moving to tears thy young Queen! The Graces, triumphing over the throne of the Lilies, have brought the Arts back to the Court of Louis.' *Aménaïde* was the chief character in Voltaire's tragedy *Tancrède*.

'Tears that misfortune was powerless to draw from my eyes, flow in gratitude !'

'But as long as her charmed waters shall wash the Empire of the Lilies, . . . she shall still hear my Lyre singing the good and noble deeds of a generous King who is her glory !'

'Let us cleanse the land of patriots, still contaminated by kings : the soil of Freedom rejects the bones of despots. *Let us break all the tombs of these deified monsters ! . . .*'

Page 128, line 13 from bottom. 'Can it be the waters of the Peneus that meander through these valleys ? *Tivoli, Blandusia, Albunea, you are now but empty names. . . .*'

Page 129, line 19 from bottom, etc. 'Foolishness is good for the health, so Baour always keeps well.'

'Foolishness inclines to stoutness, and Baour grows no thinner.'

'Le Brun's food is fame : see how thin he grows !'

'Alas ! I cannot see ; Cupid who is as blind as I would guide me. In this common peril lead us, fair Angel of light : you will lead two blind men for one.'

Page 130, line 21 from bottom, etc. 'Sister Andrieux, tell us a tale, do you hear ? if you are not asleep, sister, send us to sleep.'

'In these tales full of good things which Andrieux composes with such facility, rhyme comes in unseasonably to spoil the charm of the prose.'

Page 131, line 11 from bottom. 'The jealous and momentary darkness which covers my eyes as with a veil, is but a deceptive eclipse whence the mind issues more radiant.'

Page 141, line 8 from bottom. 'To love constantly a beauteous lady is the sweetest error among the vanities of this world.'

Page 164, line 3. 'Chary are they of speech, with a great passion for silence.'

Page 164, middle. 'Every new day is a blessing from Heaven ; let us enjoy every to-day as it is given us : it belongs to the young no more than to me, and to-morrow belongs to none.'

Page 167, middle. Alceste; the name of Molière's *Misanthrope*.

Page 173, last line but two. 'O Liberty, goddess of France! Let me die rather than live without thee! . . .'

Page 197, middle. Sainte-Beuve is referring to Denis Auguste Affre, Archbishop of Paris, who lost his life through a stray ball, while exhorting the combatants to submission, in the disturbance of June 1848. His last words were: 'Let my blood be the last to be shed . . . the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep.'

Page 199, middle. Trissotin; probably scenes from the *Femmes savantes*.

Page 204, last line but two. 'Who, holding the Shade of a brush, was cleaning the Shade of a coach.'

Page 206, line 4. 'Her long, black, soft, glossy hair, spread in curls and gallantly knotted, sweetly shade the freshness of her cheek. . . .'

Page 212, line 5. 'In forming minds as in forming bodies, Nature's efforts have been the same in all ages; she is essentially unchangeable, and has not exhausted her easy power of producing all things: the sun we see over our heads to-day was never crowned with more brilliant rays; the red roses of the spring were never clothed with a more brilliant hue; the lilies and jessamines of our gardens never had a more dazzling whiteness, and the tender nightingale who charmed our ancestors with her fresh song, had no sweeter voice in the golden age than that which awakens the echoes that sleep in our woods: with that same hand the infinite power produces in all ages minds of like power.'

Page 212, middle. On this altercation between Huet and Boileau, see Vol. II, page 143 of the present translation.

Page 213, line 14. 'The pleasant dispute in which we waste our time will pass on to future generations without end; we shall always give our reasons, and they will always reply with abuse.'

INDEX

Affre, Archb. of Paris, 197
 Affry, Comte d', 83
 Alibert, Dr., 55
 Ampère, J.-J., 1
 Andrieux, 55, 130
 Angoulême, Duc d', 79 f.
 Angoulême, Duchesse d', (Article)
 67-80
 Anne of Austria, Q. of France,
 35, 44 f., 133-147, 189, 193 ff.
 Argenson, Marquis d', 31
 Ariosto, 11
 Arnauld d'Andilly, 217
 Asselin, 83
 Ausonius, 29

Bachaumont, 198
 Bacon, 214
 Bailly, Sylvain, 111
 Ballanche, 75
 Balzac, H. de, 30
 Baour-Lormian, 129
 Bassompierre, Maréchal de, 141
 Bausset, Card. de, 7
 Bayle, 124
 Bazin de Raucou, 37 f.
 Beaufort, Duc de, 192
 Beaurain, friend of Perrault, 204
 Beauverger, Edmond de, 149
 Becquey, 178
 Belloy, de, 6
 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 5, 128
 Bernini, 208
 Bertaut, poet, 133, 140 f.
 Bertaut, Pierre, 133
 Bertin l'aîné, 186
 Berton, composer, 173
 Blacas, Comte de, 185
 Blin de Saintmore, 100, 107
 Boileau, Gilles, 130, 208
 Boileau-Despréaux, 56, 88, 97, 102,
 132, 198 f., 205 f., 210 ff., 216 f.
 Boismont, Abbé de, 91
 Boissy d'Anglas, 82, 84
 Bonald, de, 179

Bonaparte, see Napoleon I.
 Bonnet, 152
 Borcholten, 205
 Bossuet, 37, 73, 94, 120, 139, 148,
 157, 211, 217
 Bouillon, Duc de, 34, 189, 191
 Bourdaloue, 94
 Bourzeis, Abbé de, 206
 Brienne, Card. de, 159
 Brossette, 31
 Broussel, Conseiller, 47, 146
 Buffon, 50, 115, 119 f., 155
 Buffon, Mme de, 119 f.
 Burke, 57
 Bussy-Rabutin, 200 f.

Calonne, 124 ff., 130
 Carrel, Armand, 186
 Cassagne, Abbé, 206
 Cato the Younger, 4, 12
 Caumartin, Mine de, 195, 200
 Cazotte, 110 ff.
 Chabanod, 88
 Chaliier, 165
 Chamierol, Mlle, dancer, 181
 Chamfort, 64, 110 f., 124
 Chamillart, minister, 209
 Chapelain, 206
 Charles V of France, 38, 146
 Charpentier, 213
 Chateaubriand, 56, 59, 73, 81, 83,
 89, 113, 128, 156, 185 f., 211,
 216
 Chénedollé, 65
 Chénier, André, 55 f.
 Chénier, Marie-Joseph, 49, 55,
 101, 106, 109
 Chesterfield, 48
 Chevert, 29
 Chevreuse, Duchesse de, 45, 137
 Chiabrera, 110
 Christina of Sweden, 139 f.
 Cinq-Mars, 140
 Clermont-Tonnerre, Comtesse de,
 105

- Colardeau, 85, 102
 Colbert, 205-211, 218
 Collet, 98 f.
 Colnet, 107 f.
 Commynes, Philippe de, 144
 Condé, Prince de, 43-46, 140, 196, 201
 Condillac, 62, 150, 152
 Condorcet, 64, 90, 111, 156, 162, 173
 Constant, Benjamin, 31, 186
 Conti, Prince de, 34, 45, 140, 189
 Conti, Louis-François, P. de, 115, 122
 Corbière, de, 79, 186
 Corneille, 5, 9 ff., 101 f., 118, 140 f., 199
 Corneille, Mlle, 115 f.
 Coste, Jacques, 186
 Cotin, Abbé, 56
 Courtois, conventionnel, 104
 Cousin, Victor, 201
 Cramail, Comte de, 34
 Cromwell, 192, 202
 Cubières, Marquis de, 125

 Dacier, 213
 Dacier, Mme, 213
 Damas-Hinard, 7
 Dampmartin, 65
 Dangeau, Abbé, 209
 Dante, 11, 50 f.
 Danton, 168
 Daunou, 87, 145, 210
 Dauphin, son of Louis XVI, 71, 74
 David, Louis, 126, 128
 Déjazet, Mlle, 30
 Delharpe, J.-F., 82
 Delille, Abbé, 56
 Déparcieux, 49 f.
 Descartes, 154, 161, 201, 214
 Desgabets, Dom Robert, 201
 Desmaretz de Saint-Sorlin, 211
 Devienne, Marie-Louise, 82
 Diderot, 87, 110
 Didier, Charles, 79
 Domergue, Urbain, 129
 Dorat, 86, 88, 100, 102
 Duclos, 103
 Duluc, Comte, 118
 Dumouriez, 36
 Dureau de La Malle, 91

 Edgeworth de Firmont, Abbé, 76
 Elbeuf, Duc d', 34, 47
 Élisabeth, Madame, 70 f., 74

 Estrées, Cass. d', 48
 Euripides, 12

 Fabert, Maréchal, 29
 Fauriel, 1, 6, 13, 15 f.
 Fayolle, 130
 Féletz, de, 12
 Ferdinand VII of Spain, 79
 Fiévée, (Article) 172-188
 Flaugergues, 6
 Fléchier, Esprit, 2, 209
 Florian, 203
 Fontanes, de, 12, 96, 113
 Fontenelle, 85, 214, 219
 Fontrailles, 193
 Fortoul, Hippolyte, 149 f., 169, 171
 Fouché, Duc d'Otrante, 77, 178
 Franklin, Benjamin, 117, 163
 Frederick the Great, 28, 52
 Fréron, 63, 86 f., 116-119

 Gaillard, historian, 103
 Gallois, 6
 Garat, 64, 104
 Geoffroy, L. Julien, 6 ff.
 Gilbert, poet, 101 f., 107
 Ginguéné, 55, 139
 Girardin, Stanislas, 12
 Grammont, Duchesse de, 112
 Grammont, Maréchal de, 141
 Graner or Grauer, of Berlin, 183
 Grignan, Mme de, 199 f.
 Grimm, 87, 93, 99
 Guémené, Prince de, 124
 Guénard, Mme, 75
 Gueneau de Mussy, 113
 Guerchy, Mlle de, 144
 Guessard, 1
 Gui Joly, 198 f.
 Guise, Henri Duc de, 144
 Guizot, Mme, née de Meulan, 187

 Hatte-Longuerue, Mlle de, 107
 Hautefort, Mme de, 137
 Hébert, 71
 Hegel, 157
 Helvétius, 152, 179
 Hennezon, Dom, 201
 Henri IV, 28 f., 38, 125
 Henrietta Maria, Q. of England, 135, 139, 145
 Hérault de Séchelles, 165
 Hipponax, Greek poet, 124
 Homer, 11, 211, 215 f.
 Horace, 87, 102, 117
 Huet, Bp. of Avranches, 211

Jacob, patriarch, 3
 Janin, Jules, (Article) 18-30
 Johnson, Samuel, 88, 97
 Justinian, 205
 Juvenal, 164

 Labitte, Charles, 1
 La Bruyère, 142, 209
 La Harpe, 54, (Articles) 81-96,
 97-113, 129
 Lainé, 6
 La Monnoye, 3
 La Mothe, Maréchal de, 34
 La Rivière, Abbé de, 140
 La Rochefoucauld, 32, 36, 45, 94
 La Romiguière, de, 62
 Lavalette, de, 179
 Laya, Léon, 104
 Le Brun, Charles, painter, 206
 Le Brun-Pindare, 11, 84, 86 f.,
 101 f., 107, (Article) 114-132
 Le Brun, Mme, 122 f.
 Lebrun, Mme Vigée-, 125
 Le Kam, 99, 118
 Lepitre, 75
 L'Hôpital, Chancelier d', 3
 Linguet, 87
 Locke, 62
 Longinus, 10
 Longueville, Duc de, 34, 189
 Longueville, Mme de, 45 f.
 Louis IX, 38, 78
 Louis XI, 103
 Louis XII, 38, 146
 Louis XIII, 34
 Louis XIV, 32, 38, 189 f., 199,
 207 f., 211
 Louis XV, 27 f.
 Louis XVI, 57, 68 ff., 72 f., 76, 112,
 125 ff., 130, 169
 Louis XVII, see Dauphin
 Louis XVIII, 79, 178
 Louis-Philippe, 79
 Louvois, 210
 Lubomirski, Prince, 125
 Lucan, 164
 Lucretius, 115, 155

 Mably, Abbé de, 179
 Machiavelli, 31, 58, 202
 Mademoiselle, La Grande, 134
 Maine de Biran, 6
 Maistre, Joseph de, 56, 62, 149
 Malesherbes, 11
 Malherbe, 88, 97, 118
 Malitourne, 65
 Mallet, General, 34

Mallet du Pan, 162
 Marie-Antoinette, 69 f., 71 f., 75,
 77, 126 f., 194
 Marigny, 198
 Marimontel, 54, 102 f.
 Martial, 3
 Massillon, 2
 Maternus, Roman advocate, 4
 Matha, 193
 Maucroix, Canon, 164
 Maupertuis, 87
 Maury, Abbé, 91 f., 130
 Maynard, 3
 Mazarin, 35 f., 49, 44 f., 137,
 140-144, 189, 191, 193-196
 Meissonier, 36
 Menage, 213
 Menander, 211
 Ménère, Dr. Prosper, 18, 21
 Mercier, 52, 57, 106
 Mesmes, President, 47
 Meyerbeer, 9
 Mignet, 1
 Milton, 11, 211
 Mirabeau, 35, 77, 149, 162 f.,
 194
 Molé, Matthieu, 45, 47, 192 f.
 Molière, 29 f., 32, 35, 94, 199
 Molleville, Bertrand de, 159
 Monmayeux, Mlle, 99
 Montaigne, 5, 20
 Montauban, Bishop of, 105
 Montbazou, Mme de, 45
 Montesquieu, 37, 58 f., 120 f., 153
 Montpensier, Mlle de, 134
 Montreuil, 198
 Morris, Gouverneur, 154
 Mortemart, Duc de, 141
 Motteville, Langlois de, 133 f.
 Motteville, Mme de, 40, (Article)
 132-148, 194

 Napoleon I, 6 ff., 11 f., 77, 130, 160,
 168 ff., 172, 177-182, 185
 Necker, 56, 59
 Nettement, 76
 Neuchâtel, Prince de, 12
 Neuchâteau, François de, 61
 Newton, 154
 Nicolai, First President, 111
 Nicole, 143

 Orléans, Gaston Duc d', 43, 196,
 201
 Orléans, Duc d', Regent, 28 f., 31

 Palissot, 109

- Parois, Comte de, 125
 Pascal, 32, 56, 205
 Pasquier, 113
 Pastoret, Mme de, 78
 Patru, Olivier, 198
 Périer, Casimir, 186
 Perrault, Charles, (Article) 203-219
 Perrault, Claude, 204 f., 207 f., 211
 Perrault d'Armancourt, 217
 Perrault, Docteur, 204 f.
 Philippe le Bel, 7
 Pindar, 117, 216
 Piron, 84
 Plutarch, 42
 Pons, Mlle de, 144
 Pope, 97, 100, 102
 Pradon, 56, 99
 Priestley, Dr, 96
 Puy des Îslets, Chev. du, 128

 Quinault, 206, 218

 Rabelais, 3
 Rachel, 3
 Racine, 56, 89 f., 93 f., 118, 206, 210 f., 217
 Racine, Louis, 115
 Radcliffe, Anne, 176
 Raphael, 206
 Ravenel, Jules, 81, 104
 Raynal, Abbé, 104, 179
 Raynouard, (Article) 1-17
 Récamiér, Mme, 108
 Rétif de La Bretonne, 207
 Retz, de, (Article) 31-48, 57, 94, 96, 135, 139, 145, 186, (Article) 189-202
 Richelieu, 32-39, 133 f., 136
 Rivarol, (Article) 49-66
 Robespierre, 104, 130, 170, 174 f.
 Rochegude, de, 13
 Roederer, Comte, 65, 169, 178
 Ronsard, 118, 132
 Roucher, 111
 Rousseau, J.-B., 118
 Rousseau, J.-J., 31, 50, 150, 153 f., 167, 179, 184
 Royer-Collard, 62, 173

 Sabatier, Abbé, 57
 Saint-Ange, 106
 Saint-Brieuc, Bp. of, 105

 Sainte-Aularte, 38 f.
 Saint-Mégrin, Mlle de, 144
 Saint-Simon, 42, 46, 209
 Sallust, 164
 Scarron, 130, 204
 Scaurus, Emilius, 12
 Schlegel, A. W. von, 1, 6, 13, 16
 Scribe, 9
 Séguier, Chancelier, 208
 Seneca, 4, 142
 Sénecé, Mme de, 137, 143
 Senneterre, de, 40
 Sévigné, Mme de, 199-202
 Shakespeare, 8, 11, 93, 216
 Sidonius, Bishop, 29
 Sieyès, Abbé, 2, 44, (Article) 149-171, 192
 Simon the Cobbler, 74
 Staal-Belaunay, Mme de, 144
 Stael, Mme de, 154, 160
 Suard, Mme, 84
 Sully, 125 f.
 Surcourt, Marie-Anne de, 122
 Swift, 167

 Tallemant des Réaux, 33
 Talma, 8, 13
 Tasso, 11
 Templars, Order of, 7 ff.
 Theocritus, 215
 Thiers, Adolphe, 6, 104
 Tiberius, 12, 28
 Turenne, 45 f., 192
 Turgot, 162

 Vaudreull, Comte de, 124 f.
 Vaulabelle, E. de, 77
 Vergennes, Comte de, 130
 Vicq-d'Azyr, Félix, 111
 Villehardouin, 9
 Villèle, de, 79, 186
 Villemain, 1
 Villeveille, Marquis de, 90
 Virgil, 11, 25, 204
 Vitart, 205
 Vitry, Maréchal de, 34
 Volney, 96
 Voltaire, 15, 27 f., 51, 63, 81, 84, 86-90, 92 ff., 96, 101, 104, 110, 115 f., 118, 127, 132, 179, 184, 198 f.

 Walckenaer, Baron, 1

